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AND LONGITUDE

R. COLLETT SKIRVING



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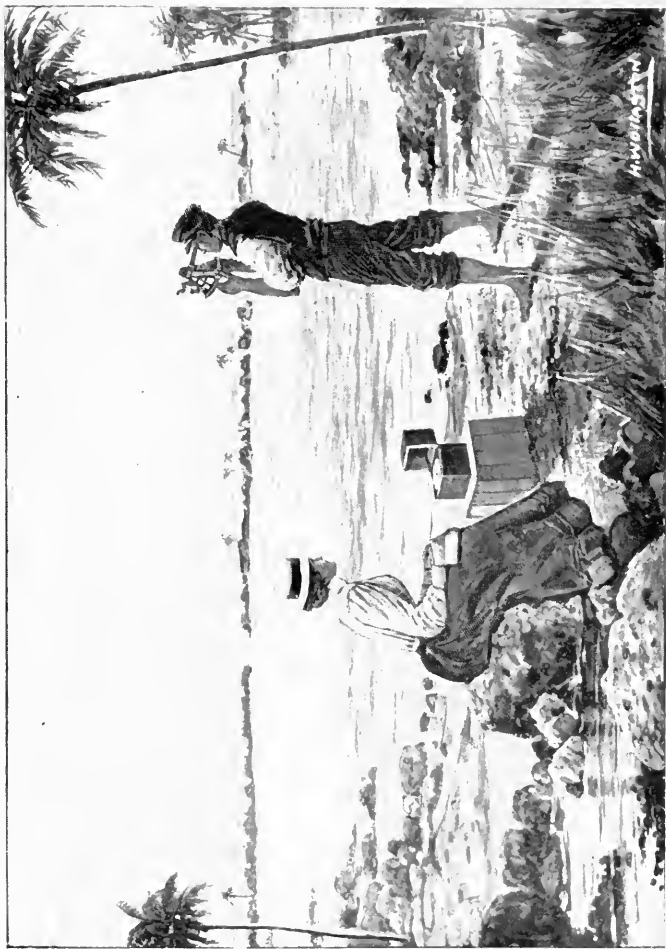
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LOVE AND LONGITUDE

Websdale, Shoosmith and Co., Printers, 117 Clarence-street, Sydney



MEASURING A LUNAR DISTANCE

Pages 121 and 95

I took the sun's altitude first, as he was furthest from the meridian

LOVE AND LONGITUDE

A STORY OF THE PACIFIC IN THE YEAR 1900

R. SCOT SKIRVING

ANGUS AND ROBERTSON

SYDNEY AND MELBOURNE 1901

*The English edition is published by The Australian
Book Coy., 38 West Smithfield, London, E.C.*

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CHAPTER I

IN WHICH I INTRODUCE MYSELF

WHEN the adventurous keels of Elizabethan seamen furrowed the Atlantic, oversea voyages were new and strange.

Beyond every horizon lay the great unknown—wild countries, alien peoples, gold, and I know not what gallant possibilities—

‘ Magic casements opening on the foam
Of perilous seas in faery lands forlorn.’

The simplest events of the sea-day were then full of mystery and wonder.

The Gulf Stream, the trade wind, the variation of the compass, all spoke of some unseen Power. Need we wonder then at the spirit of religion which coloured with its picturesque tints the minds and actions of the sixteenth-century adventurers? Ship boys sing vespers at the foot of the main mast; Drake solemnly takes communion with a ship-mate he is about to execute; the privateersman goes to prayers before plundering the galleon; while to the seeing eyes of Spaniards, St. James himself leads the ranks of Catholic Christendom against the enemy.

Even a hundred years ago, when our grandfathers ambled over the world, their logbooks were filled with the swift surprises, the strange vicissitudes, which old ocean gave to these tough, pig-tailed seamen, the makers of this larger Britain—this imperial realm which we are still enlarging.

Now all is changed and prosaic.

In these days the parallels have shrunk, and the meridians are no longer vague to the navigator. He knows well where he is, and he knows, too, that the untiring thrust of the propeller will surely bring him to his port on a certain day, nay, at a certain hour.

There are now no quaint stoppings on the ocean highway, no high-pooped Indiamen nod sea courtesies to each other over tropic swells, nor is the pirate a possible event in a Southern voyage.

In these days of hurry, steamers pass each other with a careless waft, or in pre-occupied, surly silence. The sea is safer than Piccadilly, and each step of our journey upon it is heralded by the electric pulse which throbs around the world. Yet every now and then there comes to our ears some story of the ocean, some echo of its vanished life, sometimes curious, more often tragic, which, as it were, rolls the clock back to those days of oak and hemp when steam was not.

Such a story I propose to tell. I wish I could tell it deftly, but as I can only set forth a plain tale in plain language, I must ask my readers to judge me leniently.

I shall first say who I am that write this narrative. My name, then, is Richard Blackburne, and I am twenty-eight years old. My father was a rector in

Devonshire, and sent me to school at Rugby, where I remained several happy years. I insisted on going to sea, but being too old for the Royal Navy, I went into the Merchant Service and served my apprenticeship in a vessel trading to Australia.

How well I remember her, with her white masts, black yards, and chequered sides. Years before I was born, years before steam elbowed sailing ships into humbler trades, this grand old clipper had carried passengers to Sydney. How many partings must her decks have witnessed? How many merry dances and soft speeches must have taken place on her long poop as she rolled to the southward in the push of the trade wind?

Her captain was a good sailor, a very father to the boys, and a kindly gentleman. His memory is still fragrant to me. I stayed in this ship till I was her second mate. There followed short voyages in steam tramps, then back to sail again as mate, in both square-rigged and fore-and-aft craft.

Finally, I got into a good employ on the coast of China, and would soon have held command had not my health broken down and forced me to return to England.

A rich cousin now offered me the chance of joining him in squatting pursuits in New South Wales. The chance I gladly took, and the year 1899 saw me in that colony.

Unfortunately, my cousin and I fell out. Perhaps I was to blame, perhaps he. Anyway we parted. I never saw him again, and, in February, 1900, I found myself in Sydney looking for something to do.

CHAPTER II

MY MEETING WITH CAPTAIN LEIGH, AND WHAT CAME OF IT

I HAD looked about some time for a shore job, but found, as I might have expected, that billets such as I was fit for were few and far between; so I made up my mind that nothing remained but to go once more to sea.

One Sunday afternoon I was in a tram-car on my way to a suburb, and opposite me sat an elderly man with a deeply-tanned face, keen, kindly eyes, and hair salted with grey.

He had apparently gone past his proper stopping-place, and discovering his mistake, suddenly started up to get out on the wrong side.

He did not see, as I did, that another tram was crossing us.

I caught him by the arm just as he was making a spring, which most surely would have been his last.

‘Thanks, awfully!’ he said. ‘I fancy, if you hadn’t brought me up all standing, there would have been an inquest to-morrow.’

‘Well,’ I replied, ‘there was no time for ceremony.’

I saw you didn't notice that juggernaut coming along, and I am thankful I was quick enough to block your being immolated.'

'I don't know your name, sir,' he said. 'But I am exceedingly obliged to you—I quite recognise that your quickness saved my life. Here is my card—I shall be glad to see you again.'

I was about to hunt for one of my own to give him in return when the tram stopped and he jumped out, leaving me fumbling for my card case, on which I can never lay my hands when I want it.

I read the address on the pasteboard: 'Nicholas Leigh, Australian Club.'

The man's personality interested me, and his manner, when he asked me to see him again, seemed more than the conventional 'Look-me-up-when-you-can' kind of invitation which we carelessly fling about to all sorts of people whom we don't want to see, and who happily do not often want to see us.

However, in this case, I did call at his club one afternoon, found him in, and thus was laid the foundation of an acquaintanceship which, as you will learn, had the most momentous consequences on my fortunes.

'I am glad that you have turned up,' he said, 'for in the hurry of a tram car I went off without your name and address.'

I had my card in a get-at-able position on this occasion, and handed it to him.

He looked at it, and then turning his face round to me, he said: 'What is your occupation?'

'None at present, unfortunately,' I replied, 'but I am a sailor.'

‘So I imagined,’ said he with a smile, ‘and you are out of a ship. Is that the case?’

‘Yes,’ I answered.

‘Well,’ he said, ‘I’ve been stewing indoors all day, and I want to go out now. Suppose we go into the Palace Gardens and have a pipe. I daresay no one will stop us smoking, and if they do, we can at least talk.’

I assented, and shortly afterwards we were seated with one of the noblest panoramas in the world spread out before us.

Behind us lay the busy, rich city with its thousand industries and that strange subdued hum which is the complex result of countless diverse sounds blended by distance.

Between us and the town itself lay the long rampart of Macquarie-street—surely one of the handsomest highways in any capital, combining the most dissimilar interests—stately Government buildings, palatial clubs, handsome dwelling-houses, and a great hospital. Imagine Pall Mall Park Lane, and Victoria-street rolled into one, and Macquarie-street gives you such a picture in miniature.

The westering sun lit up the scene in front of us with a mellowed glory.

Furthest away was the bold ridge of land which shuts in Sydney Harbour from the ceaseless beat of an ocean which does not always deserve its name. Closer to us, lay here an island, there a peninsula, crowned with timber, that gave variety to the landscape; the sombre greys and dark greens of native trees being relieved by the more vivid colours and

shapely forms of Norfolk Island pine or English oak. Between the points of land, vistas of sparkling water, ships at anchor, and white-sailed yachts, gave the interest of movement, and of human life, to the noble setting in which the city stands. Beside us stood the statue of Arthur Phillip, the first Governor of the territory of New South Wales, the face turned towards the Heads, looking to the ocean, as if, after a hundred years, his anxious eyes still swept the horizon for the succour on which the life of the infant colony once so greatly depended.

Several minutes passed before either of us began conversation. I think the striking scene, and all that had been done since the brave seaman, whose statue stood at our side, had lived and toiled, was in both our minds, and we smoked in silence.

At length my companion turned to me. 'I do not think,' he said, 'that I sufficiently thanked you for your smartness in saving me from an accident last Sunday.'

I made some reply. He then went on to talk of other matters—the South African war, and the plague—topics which were in all men's mouths about that time.

With the easy frankness of colonial society, he asked me a few questions about my own career. I told him somewhat of my life and times, and of my various employments at sea. He listened with interest, and I felt sure before long that he belonged to the same craft as my own.

'What should you take me to be?' said he, with a twinkle in his eye.

‘May I use the method of exclusion?’ I replied.

He laughed. ‘Yes, if you don’t exclude too many things. I’ll only give you three chances.’

‘I shall only want one, I think,’ said I, for I had a very shrewd notion that I was going to make a good guess.

‘Well, go on,’ he answered.

‘You’re not a squatter?’

‘No; I wish I was one. That is, if I owned the station, if there were no droughts, and wool was half a crown a pound. Guess again.’

‘Well, then, you have been a sailor,’ I answered. ‘If I’m wrong I give the matter up, and you’ll have to give me something easy.’

‘Quite right,’ said my new friend: ‘only it is not “have been”—I am a sailor now.’

He then went on to tell me that he owned and commanded an Island trader.

He was clearly a man of good breeding and education, and I speculated, as one often does, as to what had been his history.

I had an appointment in the city that afternoon, so I mentioned presently that I should have to make a move. He said he wanted a walk, and so he accompanied me as far as the Post Office.

The Post Office of Sydney is a handsome building, but it has one grotesque blot. Absurd carvings disfigure part of its front. They are supposed to represent certain industries. To anyone with the slightest artistic sense they are poisonous in the extreme.

As we walked towards this building we saw two

young people, evidently 'new chums,' in front of us—globe-trotters, probably; one, a young man, unmistakably just out from England—high collar, stick, trousers turned up, &c.; the other a rosy-cheeked girl. But both wholesome specimens of our home folks.

Suddenly they stopped: stiffening like two pointers close on game: astonishment on their faces.

'I'll bet they're looking at the carvings,' said Captain Leigh. 'Let's be mean and listen to what they say.'

'All right,' I replied, and we walked quietly up behind them and stood still, also looking at these carven caricatures of human beings.

'My goodness,' said the young man to the girl at his side, 'what a country! What a people! How can they bear it?'

'Awful,' said the girl. 'After this, old England is good enough for me. Why, such an outrage would not be tolerated, even in the middle of the Potteries!'

We looked at each other and laughed quietly.

'Isn't it wonderful that these poisonous things have not been taken away?' said my companion.

'It is,' I answered, 'but I should miss them; for ever since I have sailed out of this port I can find a certain amount of diversion in looking at their absurdities. They act as a kind of fun-doctor to me.'

'Nevertheless, it is bad for a new country to have things like these distorting the rising generation in their sense of what is fitting in art. They are not realistic; they are simply libels on humanity,' replied Captain Leigh.

I then bade him good-bye.

I met him several times during the next fortnight, and learned more of his interesting personality. His information on all sorts of subjects was great and exact. He told me that his monetary circumstances would allow him to live on shore, but that asthma, from which he suffered, drove him to sea, to obtain a respite. He seemed a strong-willed, somewhat silent man, yet I felt greatly attracted to him.

At the end of about ten days I received a letter from him asking me if I had yet succeeded in finding employment, and saying that if I had not, he might be able to offer me something that would suit.

I need not say what satisfaction this communication gave me, for in truth I was passing weary of playing the part of the importunate widow of Biblical fame. I do not mean to imply that all the people whom I pestered were unjust. But they certainly did not seem to hunger after my services. I answered all sorts of advertisements ; I hunted round the shipping offices. Two or three tutorships I inquired after, but, apparently, the applicant was expected to possess every known branch of knowledge—fine sewing and crochet-work perhaps excepted. I therefore saw within reasonable distance a time when I should find myself truly ‘on my uppers’ and sharing in the ample caravanserai afforded by Hyde Park or the Domain.

How punctual I was in keeping this appointment ! How full of hope and expectation I came to Macquarie-street that same morning !

‘ Well, Blackburne—not got a billet yet ? ’ he began.

‘Colonies not what they used to be, eh? Too much Labour Party? Is that what’s wrong?’

‘I don’t exactly know what’s wrong. But it seems at least certain that I’m all wrong,’ I answered rather bitterly.

‘Tut, tut, my boy,’ he rejoined, ‘your case is not a very evil one. How old are you?’

‘Twenty-eight,’ I answered.

‘Well, you’ve got youth. Are you in good health?’

‘Excellent,’ I replied. ‘Indeed, it is my appetite I so much dread.’

‘A valuable ailment,’ said Captain Leigh; ‘cherish it, Blackburne, cherish it carefully. In truth, you are grumbling without cause. You confess to youth and an excellent digestion. What the deuce have you to complain about. Isn’t the sun shining? How will you relish growing old?’

‘Well, then, sir, if these troubles are trifles, what about idleness? I am suffering from that badly.’

‘Good,’ said he, ‘that is a serious malady. But believe I can cure it. You have a master’s certificate, haven’t you?’

‘Yes,’ I replied.

‘Have you been in fore-and-afters and small craft? I don’t want the sticks taken out of the *Pandora* some fine night. Eh?’

‘I was nearly two years in a schooner,’ I answered.

‘I’m glad to hear that, for I have a vacancy in one of my vessels—the *Pandora*. If you like you may sail in her as mate.’

‘I gladly accept your offer,’ I replied at once, ‘and thank you.’

‘No thanks, no thanks, please,’ he interrupted. ‘I’d have offered you the place a week ago, only my last mate was uncertain whether he would leave me or not. He has been trying for a shore job and has got it. Good chap he is, too!’

He paused a moment, and then added:

‘Well, the thing’s fixed, so now we’ll go over to Balmain and I’ll show you your ship.’

We got over to Johnstone’s Bay, and there my eye quickly caught sight of a very handsome topsail schooner, painted white, and rather heavily sparred for her size.

‘There’s your ship,’ said my companion.

‘She’s a beauty,’ I replied.

‘Yes,’ he said, ‘she is, and you’ll find her as good as she looks.’

As we came closer to her one could hardly believe that she was a vessel designed for trade. She had a single topsail, and a mainsail that I thought relatively larger than I cared for. It was a sail that, I foresaw, needed careful management.

‘By Jove,’ I exclaimed, ‘she’s a regular flyer. Looks like a yacht!’

Captain Leigh seemed pleased.

‘Yes, she does look well. Walter Smokes, the marine architect, designed her for me; she’s well put together and as tight as a drum. Martin,’ said he to the elderly seaman who pulled us on board, ‘this gentleman is our new mate.’ He turned aside to me and added, ‘You’ll find him a prime sailor, and one of the most honest men you ever met. I have had him with me in prosperity and adversity for many years, and I don’t know anybody I trust and respect more highly.’



"THERE'S YOUR SHIP," SAID MY COMPANION

The man looked the good character just given him—a sturdy, broad-shouldered Englishman, about the Captain's own age, with bright, intelligent eyes, a weather-beaten skin, and close, curling grey hair—the type of alert, active seaman who manned our ships fifty years ago, before steam and the influence of foreigners made a British sailor about as common as a dodo.

‘Come below, Blackburne,’ said the Skipper, as he descended the companion.

I followed and looked round me in some surprise.

The trade in which the ship was employed necessitated the occasional carriage of passengers, and consequently her cabin accommodation was unexpectedly handsome for a small vessel.

Comfort and the best utilisation of space were everywhere apparent.

We stood in a plain, bright little saloon, lit by a skylight let into the small raised deck-house. Flowers stood on the swing tray, and broke the rays of the sun as they streamed through the open sides of the aperture above. Round the table were four or five revolving chairs.

Opening out of this cabin were two staterooms, right aft on each side of the rudder trunk.

‘Come into my room,’ said Captain Leigh.

It was a simple little sea bedroom. A standing cot was on one side; on the other, a chest of drawers, the top of which opened with a lid, and underneath which were stowed two chronometers and other nautical tools. The deck was uncarpeted and of a snowy whiteness. On the walls hung a few small sketches,

chiefly of ships. By the side of the bed were two pictures—one of a handsome young matron, the other of a girl, whose strong, bright face at once suggested relationship with the man who stood looking at it.

‘My wife and my daughter,’ he said simply. ‘My daughter sails with me sometimes. She is coming with us this trip.’

We walked into the adjoining stateroom. It needed nothing more than a glance to see the touch of a woman’s hand—the hand of a woman with an artistic sense.

This cabin was carpeted, and contained two berths, the upper of which could be unshipped if there was only one occupant of the stateroom.

The walls were a faint grey, picked out with some other colour. Cunningly sewn hanging pockets and neatly-made brackets clothed the bulkheads. And here and there were photographs prettily framed, whilst a pair of flowering plants afforded pleasant rest to the eye.

‘This is my girl’s room,’ said the Captain. ‘She takes great pride in it.’ It was one of the cosiest cabins I ever saw on board a ship, and I said as much.

Forward of these two rooms were two smaller cabins, one of which I found would be mine. These, with a pantry, a lavatory, and a small berth for a steward, or a cabin boy, completed the domestic arrangements under the quarter deck.

The schooner—which, by the way, was about two hundred tons burden—carried, besides Captain Leigh and myself, a second mate, six seamen, a cook, and a boy.

Altogether the vessel pleased me immensely. She was a wholesome, stout, and capable little craft.

‘Come to dinner to-morrow night; I wish you to meet my daughter,’ said the Captain as we parted on our return to town. ‘Come a little after five, as I intend first to go into a number of business matters.’

CHAPTER III

I AM TOLD THE OBJECT OF THE VOYAGE AND INTRODUCED TO MISS LEIGH

THE following afternoon I called at the boarding-house in Macquarie-street where Captain Leigh and his daughter were staying, and found myself in their sitting-room, looking over the gardens. Presently my host came in, and we were soon deeply immersed in ship's business—work which he wished done on board, directions as to stores and cargo, and so forth. All this took a good deal of time; but at last we had finished, and I said :

‘What is our destination?’

‘Well,’ he replied, ‘that’s a secret; you will therefore regard what I am about to tell you as confidential. The voyage is an out-of-the-way trip, and may lead to nothing; on the other hand it may prove a most profitable undertaking.

‘I propose,’ continued the Captain, ‘to sail from Sydney to a certain uncharted island in the Eastern Pacific, where I have reason to think there is a large deposit of guano, and upon which I have secured the necessary rights to work. If the deposit is of payable

quantity and quality, I intend to load the schooner partially, by way of a sample cargo, and then proceed to Apia, where I shall get fresh information as to visiting certain copra stations in which I am interested, and for which I am carrying stores, even if by rather a circuitous route. This done, we return here. I shall clear the schooner "for Guam."

I may explain that in Sydney, as well as other places, the curious fiction obtains of taking out a vessel's clearance for Guam when you don't wish the public to know where she is going, or don't quite know yourself. Our conversation now came to an end, for just then Miss Leigh entered the room.

The picture I had looked at on the schooner certainly had given me the impression of a handsome face; but the artist had evidently not done justice to the original.

She was tall and well proportioned, strong and healthy looking; but her real strength lay concealed by the grace which was present in her every movement. I shall not commit myself as to the colour of her eyes, but I think hazel is nearest to the correct hue. She had a low, broad forehead, and her shapely head was covered by masses of dull-gold hair, which glistened in the sunshine with an infinite fascination. Her chin was firm, her eyebrows well marked; her whole face, indeed, was a charming blend of strength and sweetness. Altogether, as she entered the room and stood looking towards us, her soft muslin frock half expressing the curved lines of her figure, she seemed

to me the best picture of a wholesome, gentlemanly girl upon which my eyes had ever rested.

‘Hester, here is Mr. Blackburne, about whom I have several times spoken. He is coming in the *Pandora* in Mr. Jones’ place. Mr. Blackburne, my daughter is quite an old sailor.’

I bowed, and Hester Leigh, for such was her name, smiled, and held out her hand, which, by the way, as I found time to notice, was small and firm.

‘My father has told me of the way in which you saved him from a horrible accident,’ she said. ‘I am glad to be able to thank you myself. My father, I always tell him, requires a London policeman to keep him from the perils of trams and ’busses.’

Dinner was announced, and we three sat down.

The meal was a cheery one. Captain Leigh was in excellent spirits, told us stories of past voyages, and spoke very hopefully of the venture in which we were about to embark. His daughter said little. Indeed, her father was in such excellent vein that he kept us both well entertained. We were good listeners, and his talk and his jokes were worth listening to.

After dinner coffee was served on the balcony, and we men smoked. Darkness fell; the Gardens and the Harbour sparkled with many lights; the silence occasionally broken by the whistle of a passing steamer or a bugle call from one of the men-o’-war. By and bye the Captain went into the sitting-room.

‘Hess, dear, I shall leave you to entertain Mr. Blackburne. To-morrow will be English mail day, and I want to polish off a few millstones in the way of letters.’

I lit a fresh pipe, and Miss Leigh went on with her knitting—a work which women seem able to do under any conditions.

There are some men and women between whom the springs of talk refuse to flow. Perhaps one is dull—perhaps both. It is then said that ‘they don’t get on,’ and that they bore each other. I think, if the truth were really known, most people rather do bore each other. Spontaneity, the power of interesting others, is a rare faculty. Those who have it are social successes. On the other hand, there are people who find each other interesting only after a considerable acquaintance. They have learned, in fact, that they are mutually worth cultivating. This memorable evening—I say memorable, for the day must always be marked by a red letter on which you meet ‘the not impossible she’ of your life—I felt a strange shyness upon me, and I remained silent for some little time.

At last my companion began to ask me some simple questions about England, and where I had been in Australia. It was conversation of the most ordinary type; yet there is an indefinite sympathy and interest of manner in some people which makes all the difference between attraction and repulsion. Such sympathy and interest of manner Miss Leigh possessed, and by their power charmed me outside of the barrier of shyness which fenced me round, and which, no doubt, was largely the result of my solitary life. I take it, too, that we were of interest to each other in so far that we were both young people, and were about to be thrown much together in the intimate

association of a small vessel. In a few minutes I found myself telling her about my home and family in Devonshire and feeling happy in doing so.

‘Do you come from Devonshire?’ she asked.

‘Yes,’ I replied.

‘I know that county, and Somersetshire, pretty well. I used to spend my holidays down there.’

One thing led to another and I found that she had stayed with an aunt of mine and knew my small cousins. It is odd how a trifling link like this puts people on a friendly footing. From England and common friends we drifted into other subjects—books, travel, amusements. She had not, so far, mentioned her mother, and I wondered if she was alive. She told me, however, that her father had once been a lieutenant in the Royal Navy, but ever since she could remember he had been at sea in the Merchant Service. Just then I heard the clocks striking ten, and I rose to go.

‘Well, Blackburne,’ said the Captain, looking up from his writing table, ‘you had better turn up here in a day or two and let me know how the schooner is getting on. I shall not be aboard myself, as I have a number of other matters to look to.’

During the next ten days I was very busy on board getting the run of things, but I nevertheless managed to see a little of the Leighs. Once we went to the theatre together, and one day she and Mrs. Rawlinson—the wife of her father’s agent—came on board to arrange the cabins. I gave them tea, and we had a pleasant afternoon.

A good many matters required attention on the

Pandora. The standing rigging needed lifting, as some signs of wear and tear were apparent. The sails had to be bent, and gear of all kinds to be shipped.

Of cargo we were taking much less than our carrying capacity, and it consisted largely of goods on the owner's account for copra stations in which he had an interest.

We took, however, a good deal of timber, with which to erect stagings to handle the guano. We likewise shipped several large buoys and moorings to be laid down for the use of vessels when loading the deposit. We also carried a condenser, a good deal of coal, and some hundreds of gunny bags, for Captain Leigh did not intend to stow in bulk the guano he proposed bringing to Sydney.

All this freight, with a sufficiency of ballast, left the schooner in excellent sailing trim. And when the little hooker was painted, and everything set up and hauled taut, she made one think of Cowes week in August, rather than of a trader, and the vast Pacific.

CHAPTER IV

WE SAIL FROM SYDNEY

WE left the wharf on the afternoon of March 23rd, and, to say the truth, I was not sorry to do so. It was a moist, muggy month in Sydney, and, what between the war in South Africa and the plague in the city, it was anything but a cheerful place. Moreover, a Wynyard-square boarding-house at night and Darling Harbour stench during the day formed an environment which made a wholesome schooner and fresh sea breezes something to wish for.

We proceeded as far as Watson's Bay, the pilot station, and then anchored for the night.

I took one of our boats ashore to the little quay to meet Miss Leigh, who joined us later in the evening, having come down from the city by steamer. As we pulled off, I noticed with some personal pride the trim, yacht-like appearance of the *Pandora*.

I could not call to mind a vessel I had ever known which took my fancy more as an example of marine architectural grace.

That night the second mate and I picked the watches, and three sturdy, likely-looking men fell to me.

Martin Johnston, an old man-of-war's man, of whom I have already spoken, and who will appear frequently in this narrative; a Swede named Olaf Svin, who had long been on coasters running to the Northern rivers of the colony; and lastly, a youth from New Zealand, about twenty years old, a fine hearty young fellow, McKeowen by name.

To the second mate's watch fell two cockneys, Jones and Simpson, and a huge Sandwich Islander called 'Jack.'

The boy's name was Alf Nash. He and the cook kept no watch. The boy was a great character, and some of his conversation I have kept a note of. He and Martin had both sailed in the *Pandora* on previous trips. One or two of the others were not strangers to Captain Leigh, as they had sailed in other vessels belonging to him.

At five a.m. the following morning we got our anchor, and with a light air from the west we cleared the Heads about six o'clock or thereby. We remained in sight of the land till about ten in the forenoon, when we picked up a fresh breeze from the N.E., and soon saw the last of the Australian coast.

I found that the Skipper had decided to make his casting to the southward, and so we laid off a course to take us through Cook's Strait.

During the dog watch I had a long talk with him, and he gave me the story of the guano island we were now bound for.

'We have quite a long passage before us,' he remarked, 'for I make the island to be in lat. 19° 5 S. and long. 105° 14' W.'

‘Why,’ I answered, ‘that is four or five hundred miles north or so of Easter Island.’

‘Just so,’ replied Captain Leigh. ‘It is placed in about as island-vacant a patch of the ocean as you can well find.’

‘I should like to hear how you came across it,’ I said.

‘It was this way,’ he answered. ‘You know how I like to read old accounts of voyages. Well, I came across the report of an American whaler, in 1805, sighting land about the position I have given you. The report of this discovery was noted in several of the earlier sailing directions, but with a query after it, as no subsequent observers had verified the American’s discovery. Indeed all notice of it is omitted from both modern charts and *Findlay’s Directory*.’

‘That is curious,’ I said, ‘for when we consider the number of whalers in the South Pacific during the first forty years of the century it seems strange that none of them picked it up.’

‘It is odd,’ he replied, ‘for fifty years ago there were far more ships scattered over these seas than furrow them now. So much does the latter-day carrying trade confine itself to certain ocean highways—marine Oxford or Regent streets. As for the grimy old whaler, well, oil-hunting is a vanished industry.’

‘Several years ago,’ he continued, ‘I happened to be somewhere near the supposed position and I hauled the ship up a point or two on the chance of seeing land, if, indeed, it existed at all. My curiosity was rewarded, for some hours afterwards land was sighted

where none was laid down on the charts. I therefore certainly identified this discovery with that of the American captain—made ninety years previously. I stood close in, sounding all the time, and ascertained that the island contained a large amount of guano. I would have made a fuller examination, but the weather was unfavourable, so I kept the ship off on her course without closer scrutiny. My observations, which were good ones, placed it twenty odd miles further to the east than that assigned by the discoverer.

‘I suspected that the guano could be worked to profit, and then and there determined to return armed with the necessary legal rights to ship the deposit. Hence this voyage.’

During the next few days, after leaving the coast, we had rather unsettled weather, rain and squalls, and though the *Pandora* made excellent weather of it, still it was wet, raw, and miserable, and I remembered, with regret, the comforts of my cousin’s station, and, after the manner of my kind, cursed the hour I went to sea.

When we had fairly cleared the land I saw comparatively little of the Captain for some days. He was just recovering from a bad attack of asthma; moreover, he was, as I already knew, a good deal of a book worm; and when not engaged in navigating his ship he was absorbed in literature. He had a profound acquaintance with the history of navigation and maritime enterprise; but, quite apart from professional lore, he seemed to have ‘made all knowledge his province.’ Whether it was a point in

history, in biography, or general literature, was immaterial. I learned to look upon him as a sort of animated *Encyclopædia Britannica*. His daughter used to call him her 'Times Edition.'

As the days passed I found with inward comfort that he left me to myself to carry on the routine of the ship. On the whole I had much to give me satisfaction. I saw he trusted me; and nothing, to a man of my temperament, could give more satisfaction than the trust and good opinion of a man whom I recognised as my professional superior.

The schooner proved as good as she looked, staunch, weatherly, and dry. We were well manned for our size, and the men struck me as a particularly able, clean-looking crowd. We had fair winds, and the *Pandora* was hardly off her course all the way across the Tasman Sea.

On the eighth or ninth day out we sighted the high land of Mount Egmont, lying fifty miles away to the nor'ard. How glorious it looked with the sunlight glistening on its snow-crowned top!

Miss Leigh was an early riser, and invariably came up as soon as the decks were washed down. On this particular morning she had been about for some time before we brought the mountain abeam.

How impossible it seems to write an adequate description of a pretty woman! I shall not, then, attempt to place on paper the charm of this simple, unaffected girl as she stood that morning, her figure swaying to the movement of the schooner. But her picture remains with me, so that in the after years, when youth has long vanished, I can summon it up

and live anew in those bright hours when love first began to vibrate in my heart's strings.

I walked across towards the companion where she stood and handed her the glasses, which she turned upon Mount Egmont.

'Have you been in New Zealand, Miss Leigh?' I asked.

'Yes, many years ago, in Dunedin—but I do not remember it, Mr. Blackburne, for I was a small baby. I was born off the Cape of Good Hope on the same voyage.'

'Have you been often at sea since?' I asked.

'Oh, yes; several voyages with my father when my mother was alive; and I have done some yachting in the Channel. My mother died when I was about ten. Father has never recovered from it; he grew old almost at once; he felt it so hard that she should have shared his poverty and not have lived to see him prosperous. Father had a deal of trouble in past years, and he always says that Mother dragged him through it.'

This, then, was the explanation of her father's silence concerning his wife.

Miss Leigh continued: 'I was left at school in England; my Mother's people looked after me; but Father, to my great joy, took me on a couple of trips.'

'You were talking about hospitals the other day, Miss Leigh, and I understood you to say you had been in one.'

'Oh, yes,' she answered. 'Becoming an hospital nurse is the same kind of thing to girls that going to sea is to many boys. I determined to do it—and did.'

I have been two years in a London hospital, and I suppose I should be there now only Father has so many interests in Sydney that he couldn't come home to England to see me, so he sent for me. If his asthma would only let him stay ashore I should keep his house. But as that seems impossible I have gone a voyage or two with him instead. It isn't two years yet, Mr. Blackburne, since I came to New South Wales; so you see, even if I'm an old sailor, I'm quite a "new chum."

'Don't you hate living in a boarding-house?' I asked.

'I should just say I do,' said Miss Leigh; 'but, as a matter of fact, I have had very little of it, for part of the time I have been at sea in this ship, and when in Sydney I have stayed with the Rawlinsons. You met Mrs. Rawlinson. She has been kindness itself and I have made a number of friends who have been very good to me—Australian hospitality is a reality. So I have been on visits to various places both in Sydney and up country, and my rather isolated position has not pressed on me. All the same I wish Father could stay ashore and have a home. When Mother was alive and he had to go to sea, Father longed for a home. Now she is gone, and he could live anywhere he wished, he says he must keep at sea or else he'll die.'

Just then Alf Nash came aft. I had already found a good deal of amusement in his droll ways. Miss Leigh knew him from a former voyage, and used to divert herself by drawing him out.

This boy was an odd specimen of humanity. He

might have been thirteen or he might have been that age and one hundred added to it, so meagre, so aged-looking, was this waif of a great city. He had the curious accent of the Sydney larrikin, the strange mingling of the twang of the East End of London with the softer drawl of New South Wales. His face and expression were grotesque. His left eyelid—as the result of some injury—drooped permanently over his eye, and the orb which was uncovered was dark, deep set, restless, and merry. When he wanted to be particularly impressive he hitched the dropped lid up with his left thumb.

His face was somewhat like that of an aged and cunning, but kindly, monkey.

He had a huge mouth, which will be best described by saying that it was happily arrested by his ears, and these stuck out like those of a listening elephant.

Miss Leigh called him up to where we were standing.

‘I asked you the other day, Alf, where you were born?’

‘On the Rocks,* Mum.’

‘Where is that?’ said Miss Leigh.

‘Why, it’s hup or near the ’ights of Church ’ill, hoverlooking the ’arbour,’ replied the boy, breaking his neck over every aspirate.

‘What age are you now, Alf?’

‘I doesn’t rightly know, but the old woman, she thinks Hi’m sixteen; but the old man, ’e reckons Hi’m more. Blime me if I knows, Lydy.’

‘What took you to sea?’ I asked.

‘It wur this w’y,’ said the urchin. ‘I wur pickin’

* A remnant of old Sydney; not now an aristocratic quarter.

hup a livin' any'ow. See this eye? Well, I wur in a ricing stible, an' I gets busted agin a 'urdle, an' knocked silly loike. They tikes me to the 'orspital, and the doctor bloke, 'e works away at me 'ead, an' finds a hulster on me brine. 'E 'as to cut it hout and they 'ad to let down this 'ere heyelid to cover hup the 'ole. See the scar, Lydy?'

'Well, my boy, go on.'

'After I gets discharged I goes back to the ricing stible and I does well enough. But a fly bloke I knows on, 'e gives me somethin' hup my sleeve, and my horse goes and run second when by roights 'e oughter run first. Well, I gets the chuck from that job—"disqualerfied" they calls it—"suspichus runnin'."

'Then, one day, I meets the 'orspital doctor.

'Says 'e, "Well, Alf, what's on now?"'

'Says I, "No luck, Doctor. I've got the 'chaff-bag.'"*

"'Ow's that?" says 'e.

'And I tells 'im stright 'ow it were, man to man, jes' as Hi'm a-tellin' ye now, Lydy.

"Well," says 'e, "Hi'll get you a job as boot-boy and ginerly useful in a genelman's family, if you'll keep honest."

"I'll be stright," says I; 'Gor blime me if Hi'm not."

'So I thanks 'im, and tells 'im Hi'm fair on the job.

"Well," 'e says, "you'll 'ave to get somethin' temporey-like till the family comes down to town."

* 'The sack' or his dismissal.

‘So I goes a-sellin’ pipers. Sings hout the ‘eadings, I does—“Special edection”—“Sooicide of a lamp post”—“Doin’s in Divorce”—“Society in ‘ell.” I does pretty well, too, for I knows a lot o’ ricing blokes, and a heap of coves buys from me because I’m that damned ngly (beg yer parding, Miss; that word were a haccident). Well, I knocks hout a few shillin’s over and above hexpenses, w’ich I gives to the old woman, and then my old man, ‘e goes and snaffles them from ‘er. ‘E’s a reg’lar “Jimmy Woods””* ‘e is. ‘E’d scoff a prayer meetin’, ‘e would, if it ‘ad a drink hinside o’ it, tho’ I’ll allow I ‘ave seen ‘im a little sober once or twice, but not orften. ‘In an’ me don’t ‘it it. So one noight ‘e ‘its me that ‘ard that Oi goes off silly-loike and ‘e gets jugged over the job. ‘E swore ‘e’d finish me w’en ‘e come hout from doin’ time. So Mother, she thinks it best for me to clear hout for a bit—and so I does, and dosses in the Domain.†

Alf was evidently in a communicative vein, and I was anxious to hear if he had really been an indoor servant. I should have thought a dingo in a lambing paddock would be about as suitable a combination. I therefore asked him what next befell.

‘By and by,’ he continued, ‘I really gets the job as boot-boy in a toff’s ‘ouse in Potts Point. A Jew gent ‘e were. Lord, Lydy, the eatin’s in that ‘ouse—heverythink hup to the ‘ammer. I gets quite fat, I does. But the Cook she couldn’t abear me.

* A man who drinks by himself.

† A large park in Sydney where ‘sundowners’ and homeless people generally camp at night.

'She wur a big, fat Hirish gal, an' it was, "'Ere you boy, there!" "'Ere, you gutter-snipe!" "Where are you?" and such like. One day we 'as some words. I seen 'er kissin' the cove what bought the drippin' an' I gives 'er away to the other gals. So I says, "Look 'ere, Miss O'Toole," says I, "'ow long is it since you were a-hoeing taties with your toes?"

"None of your durrty impurrtenince," says she, quite grand like.

"'Ullo," says I, "what 'ave we 'ere? One of the quality, with six-button gloves hup to 'er helbows, and clean stockin's on Sundays."'

'My heye, she lets drive at me with a stoo-pan, and it 'its the lydy of the 'ouse (she was a-comin' inter the kitchen) full in 'er stummick. Gor blime me, Miss, I gets my ribs nigh loose with larfing. There was a proper fust-class row. Anyw'y, I gets my walkin' ticket hover it. And 'ere I ham—goned for a s'ilor.'

'Well, Alf,' said Miss Leigh, 'now you are at sea, try to be a good sailor and learn your work. It is far better to have a trade than live anyhow, as you have been doing.'

'That's roight, lydy, I'm a-goin' to graft proper and steady. Drink'll kill the old man, sure enough! And then the old woman will be middlin' comf'rt'ble. She can keep lodgers and do a bit of washin'. I'll 'elp 'er a bit, too. No more bloomin' "'eavy fathers" for me, as I 'ear them say at the Tivoli 'Theayter.'

The wind was drawing ahead, and I had to trim sail, so the further experiences of Master Alf Nash, of Miller's Point, Sydney, were adjourned for the time.

We did not slip through Cook Strait as quickly as we hoped.

Strong head winds and thick, rainy weather bothered us not a little. And an incident now occurred which went near to bringing us all to an abrupt end.

We had been under short canvas for nearly two days, and had with difficulty done little more than hold our own against the strong gale and head sea.

On the afternoon of April 2nd we were off the high, timber-clad hills of D'Urville Island. We were sure of our position, for the prevailing thickness had lifted about three p.m., and we had got good cross bearings.

But about four o'clock the weather was thicker than ever, and vicious squalls of wind and rain swept over the struggling little vessel. The schooner was then under reduced sail; but, even so, she had as much as she could carry.

We were bursting through the head sea, with her lee-rail smothered, and white torrents pouring along her water-ways. We wished, indeed, to get through the Straits, out of narrow waters, and the Skipper was pressing her.

At dusk we were well in the fairway, and were keeping a sharp lookout, both by eye and ear, for there is a considerable traffic round this part of the New Zealand coast.

Captain Leigh and his daughter were standing well aft on the weather side of the deck-house.

Our ship was close-hauled on the starboard tack, standing towards the northern side of the passage.

I myself was forward on the lee-side of the quarter deck, when I heard the most fearful yell from the fore rigging :—

‘ A vessel on the starboard beam ! ’

I ran over to the weather rail and beheld a most appalling sight, for there, oozing out of the dense obscurity, I could discern the huge bulk of a steamer coming right down on top of us—wind and sea on her quarter, and a mountain of white foam at her bows.

I turned aft. The Captain was perfectly calm.

‘ Shout ! All of you ! ’ he cried.

Then, turning to the steersman, I heard his clear voice say :

‘ Don’t shift your helm ! ’

We yelled and shouted all we knew, and I blew the fog horn.

A few moments of suspense followed, then slowly—it seemed an age to us whose lives hung in the balance—the great imminent iron mass fell away to port, and brushed past our taffrail not twenty feet distant.

Her huge wall-side came into view and swept out of sight in a roar of wind, and crushed, foam-covered sea.

I think we all looked pretty pale after so near a shave, nevertheless I could not help admiring the coolness of Miss Leigh. No one could have behaved more calmly in the stress of those few fateful moments. She was holding on to a back-stay, wrapped in a long yellow oilskin coat, and from under the thatch of her sou’-wester there blew out a stray rain-soaked curl.

She looked curiously like her father as she stood beside him on that wind-swept, spray-drenched deck, while the gale played its mad music through the half-naked spars of the groaning storm-beaten ship.

CHAPTER V

WE LEAVE COOK STRAIT

THE weather moderated towards morning, and we made sail; nevertheless several days elapsed before we got through these narrow waters; and we were all pretty tired of 'Bout ship!' before we finally took our departure from Cape Palliser on the eastern coast of the North Island.

Still it was interesting sailing; and of all places in the world which I have visited I think I prefer New Zealand—climate, scenery, vegetation, productions—all make it charming—'where,' I concluded, 'every prospect pleases.'

'Yes,' added the Captain, who had been listening as I confided the above impressions to his daughter, 'but politics are vile.'

Hester (I was already beginning to call her so to myself) and I laughed, for I had already learned how intensely conservative he was in his views on legislation. Indeed, it is only by studying the ways of colonial politicians of the professional type that one realises the risk of giving ignorant and self-seeking demagogues power over the property of others.

Commend me to colonial life to make a hard-working man a Conservative.

It generally happened that Miss Leigh and I fell into talk in the second dog watch. I had begun to look forward to these meetings in a way which surprised myself.

One particularly fine evening we were sailing fast, but the sea was smooth and the vessel as steady as a church. 'How glorious the sea looks and how sweetly the *Pandora* is going along,' said Miss Leigh.

'Yes,' I replied, 'if the ocean was always like this one might indeed "sell a farm and go to sea" without doing a very foolish thing.'

'Well, at any rate,' she replied, 'you feel on a vessel like this that you are really at sea. For myself I never feel so on a mail steamer. The smells, the engines, the noise, the crowd of people, and above all, the "amusements," make me long for a lonely little ship like this. "White wings" may flap us across the ocean very slowly, but they do it very sweetly and very beautifully.'

'You came out in a large steamer, Miss Leigh?'

'Yes. It was interesting enough touching at Malta and Colombo. But I wearied of the passage. And oh, the terrors of the "sports committee." Life on a mail steamer might be quite tolerable if it were not for its amusements.'

'I agree with you wholly,' I replied. 'I once made a trip as a passenger from Bombay to London, and it was impossible to find peace anywhere. Crowds of people, quoits, and cricket made the decks hideous, while swarms of spoilt Indian children made the

cabins impossible. In self-defence I had to join the rioters. That trip was the most arduous idleness I ever embarked upon.'

'I am afraid,' said Miss Leigh, 'that you must be rather a solitary man. Is "a crowd not company, and are faces but a gallery of pictures?"'

I smiled and felt pleased when I heard her transpose those words of Bacon.

'Do you read Bacon, Miss Leigh?'

'A little—at least I know his Essays pretty well. But I wish he hadn't been so worldly and mean. I declare it hinders my self-improvement when I think how his precepts and practice disagreed.'

I thought this a very feminine view, for I had learned to dissociate the man from his teaching—else what would we not seldom feel on Sundays? The parson and his preaching are not always in keeping. Let us take both at their proper worth, and not allow the benefit of the one to depend on the worthiness of the other.

'By the way,' I said, 'talking of Bacon, I always think the Sydney people ought to put up a statue to him as the real founder of the frozen meat industry.'

'Why so?'

'Don't you remember the manner in which he died?'

Miss Leigh thought a moment and then said:

'Do you mean the incident of stuffing the dead fowl with snow to see if decay were thereby averted?'

'Yes,' I answered, 'and he thus got a chill, and died of it. But he lived long enough to record that the experiment succeeded "excellently well."'

'I remember all about it now,' she answered. 'By

and by, when you have become a rich shipowner, and carry thousands of frozen carcasses to London, you must erect such a statue to your favourite.'

'I think, then,' I replied, 'that Bacon will remain uncommemorated, for I fear me I shall always be a poor man.'

We fell silent. I think my readers may possibly have already guessed that this girl's sweetness and beauty were beginning to fill a large part of my daily thoughts. But with any idea of love came the cold reflection that the beggarly pay of the sea, and my own commercial ineptitude, would probably never give me an income sufficiently large or settled to justify me in asking Miss Leigh to marry me. Besides this, she was an only child, and herself somewhat of an heiress; hence it would be a very unequal match.

'What are you thinking about, Mr. Blackburne?' she suddenly asked.

I flushed as I answered:

'I am thinking of what a hard mistress Old Ocean is to those whose misfortune it is to serve her.'

'Please don't say misfortune. Where would our country be without her sailors? A sailor—a British sailor I ought to say—is a live man at any rate. And in spite of hardship and poverty you know the sea is a fine profession.'

'True,' I answered, 'but, nevertheless, it is sometimes very full of bitterness—even "when skies are sweet as a psalm."'

I was leaning over the rail at the time and I felt her eyes upon me. Presently she turned away, and, as our conversation was interrupted, we said no more.

During the past few weeks I had learned what a strong, wholesome mind this dear lady possessed. How true and attentive to her father! How industrious and cheerful! How well read!

One evening we dropped upon the time-worn subject of women's rights and the opening of professions to women. I was curious to learn what she would say on such a matter. I recollect it was the day we lost sight of Cape Palliser.

Her father pointed to the land which lay away astern like a faint smudge against the after-glow of the sunset.

'Look, Hess, there lies the country of experimental legislation—female suffrage and a lady-mayor. Do you think it would satisfy your aspirations?'

His daughter made a little pout of contempt.

'What!' said her father with a laugh, 'you turn up your nose at the political and social excesses of New Zealand, and yet the last time I was in England I remember a certain little girl declaring she intended to have a profession, and would not be a drag on any man.'

'So I did, Father, dear, but I didn't ask for a vote. And I don't want to be a mayor. And I didn't say that a woman should have the *entrée* to every profession. One has to be just, and remember that the poor men have to live somehow!'

'Oh, you shifty politician!' retorted her father. 'What, then, are your views? Here's Blackburne as a witness, and we'll take them down in writing.'

'Just like men,' said Miss Leigh gaily; 'you get courage in numbers to hunt down a poor lone woman.'

I hate one's opinions being written to confute one afterwards. To alter them only shows how progressive one is—at least so say politicians in want of votes. Besides, in these matters, you know that women have “intuitive perceptions.”’

‘Never mind the political villains,’ said her father, ‘let us have your deliberate opinions—your “rational deductions.” I say, Blackburne, we’ll interview this lady.’

‘Do you approve of women having votes?’

‘Certainly not,’ said his daughter, with a toss of her shapely head.

‘Why not?’

‘Because women, for the most part, take no real interest in the subjects at issue at an election, and would be swayed by hustings oratory far more even than the man in the street.’

‘Now, Blackburne, it is your turn.’

‘What about the professions, Miss Leigh? Say the church?’

‘Oh, the church! Father, I never asked to be admitted to holy orders—now, did I? It makes me quite ill to see a woman conducting a prayer meeting. I know one who smooths her eyebrows when she gets off her knees—vain thing! Of course it is possible that a woman might become an excellent bishop. All the same, I don’t think hers would be a peaceful diocese.’

‘But what about a woman curate?’ I asked.

‘A high church curate, even if athletic, is not a very consoling spectacle at any time. But what a high church curatess would be like I tremble to think.’

What excitements in sacred millinery would she not invent? What heart-burnings over the fit of one's alb or stole?'

'Hessie, you quite shock me,' said her father. 'Tell us now about medicine.'

'Well, Father, I think medicine is a fair field for a small number of specially gifted women. But I don't think I disparage my sex when I say that of fifty male medical students, thirty will turn out pretty good doctors, while of the same number of women students I doubt if more than fifteen will do any good in their profession.'

Miss Leigh turned to me and laughed as she said, 'Mr. Blackburne, don't believe my father—I mean he's trying to make out I've got "views." I haven't got any, really. I wanted to become a nurse, because it is the natural outlet and the best and most suitable work for many women who have to earn their own living, or who have no immediate home duties. But truly I don't want to see men as a body joining the unemployed—driven out by female competition!'

'Well done, Daughter,' said her father, evidently pleased. 'I'll ask you only one more question——'

'Now, Father, when is the inquisition going to cease?'

'In a moment, Child. Should matrimony be abolished by law?'

'Father, the worm will turn, and I refuse to answer the question.'

'Well, Blackburne, I commit her for contempt of court, and imprison her till the rising of the same.'

As he said this the kindly old man linked his arm in

hers, and added, 'Well, my lady, I don't think I'll punish you after all, for I'm satisfied that you at least understand all about being kind to your grumpy old dad.'

It was dusk, and we stood in the shadow of the mainsail; yet it was light enough to see the quick glance of affection which filled the girl's eyes as she patted her father's handsome face.

I thought to myself that this girl's true profession was to be the centre and the sunshine of a home, and of those nearest and dearest to her. For this I hold to be the best crown of womanhood—to be a wife and mother.

For those who unhappily miss these joys the cold glory of a profession is a wise provision against dependence, against want, and against those grey days when youth is past, which truly press harder on an unwedded woman than on a solitary man.

The next few days slipped pleasantly away.

I don't think I have said anything yet about the second mate, whose name, by the way, was William Cassidy. He was a stout, ignorant sailor who, under a rough exterior, had a heart of gold. An Irishman, witty, kind, and an excellent practical seaman. He had sailed in another schooner belonging to Captain Leigh. He was an amusing character, and full of stories of all sorts. He was, unlike most Irishmen, rather fond of the Chinese, with whom he had had many dealings both afloat and ashore.

He amused me very much by describing how a countrywoman of his sat on an amiable and polite 'Chow.'

Told by Cassidy, a quid in his cheek, the narrative punctuated by expectoration, any story was funny.

‘Moy counthrywimmin is anythin’ but poloite at toimes. I moind three years ago come Juloy; I was comin’ from the Cape to Melbourne and we had a power of steerage passengers. A lot of Oirish and a good sphrinkling of Choinese. It was morthal cowl’d, and the decks were that wet nobody wanted to wash.

‘I sees a Chinkey a-goin’ for’ard in his pyjamas, and his schlaping coat was a-flappin’ in the wind.

‘He gets as far as the steerage companion and there, in the lee soide av it, was sittin’ an ould crone av the name av Mistress Flynn; she were suckin’ the thin end of a dudheen.

‘Welly cowl’d, Ma’m, welly cowl’d, Missy Tymm,’ says the Choinaman, shiverin’ loike.

‘“Cowl’d be damned,” says the ould girl. “Ye durrtty haythen, why don’t ye tuck the tail av yer shirt into yer pants?—and thin, begorra, it’s not cowl’d ye’ll be miscallin’ it.”

‘Bedad, Mr. Blackburne, I thought I’d never finish wid the divarsion it giv’ us.’

I don’t exactly know why I laughed as much as I did. I suppose it was the Irish drollery of speech and gesture. Just then Miss Leigh came on deck, and Cassidy went below.

The men were at various jobs on the rigging, and noticing that a certain rope was beginning to chafe at a particular place, I sang out to one of the watch to ‘end for end it.’

Shortly afterwards Hester (for I now constantly

thought of her to myself by her Christian name) walked across to where I was standing.

‘Mr. Blackburne, what does “end-for-ending” mean?’ she asked.

‘If you watch what that sailor is about to do, it will give you a better answer than I can by words. It’s this way: when one part, say of a halliard, is fast, and the other end is the part hauled upon, the rope must evidently get worn chiefly at one particular place, where friction comes most. In this case, you see, he is reversing the parts, and making fast the end which previously was the loose end, and was used for hauling. Why do you ask?’

‘I’ll tell you. Last night, after you had relieved Mr. Cassidy, I heard him telling my father, in his funny Irish way, of a christening he had attended at the Mariners’ Church. One of the hands on a ketch he sailed in took his little one to be christened. The company assembled close to the font—or, as Mr. Cassidy expressed it, “All hands were standing jist forninst the dish.” The sailor grasped his child by the loose clothes at the baby’s back and held it suspended face downwards. The clergyman leant forward and said in an audible whisper, “Hold the babe the other way.”

‘Well, the poor man, in real trepidation, began to turn the infant in roley-poley fashion, but only made it cry the louder. “The other way round,” again whispered the parson, but with more emphasis. This still further confused the parent, who began reversing the process. Mr. Cassidy apparently grasped the difficulty, for he simply called out, “End-for-end the kid, Jack.”

““Right you are,” said the parent, and lightly tossed the child from one hand to the other, bringing it neatly face up to the minister. The infant, of course, was now lying snugly on its back, as it should have been at first.

‘My father seemed very diverted, but I confess I was not sailor enough to see much wit in the story beyond the not very hilarious fact that Mr. Cassidy had evidently given the correct order. But “I hae ye noo.”’

Up to this our voyage had been a pleasant one, but we were soon to experience a change, in which the merry laugh and funny story of the dogwatch were to be replaced by bitter tragedy, and some of the sorest trials which come to those whose fate it is to spend their lives upon the sea.

CHAPTER VI

THE RATS DIE ON BOARD THE SHIP

SOME time in the first or second week in April we noticed a very bad smell in the lazarette ; and the cook, having shifted a few cases, reported that he had found some half-dozen rats lying dead, also that he had seen several others apparently so ill as scarcely to attempt to escape.

This matter we discussed at breakfast.

I think we felt as if a cold shower had been thrown over us when Hester remarked, *apropos* of the dead rats :

‘Why, it makes me think of plague. You know it is said that rats and, I think, mice, die first, and then plague breaks out among human beings. In Sydney no end of trouble was taken to destroy all the rats.’

‘Yes,’ I said ; ‘I’ve heard the same thing in the East. At Hong Kong, two years ago, the rats died in thousands before the outbreak of disease.’

‘Did the health authorities board you when you were at the loading berth in Darling Harbour?’ asked Captain Leigh.

‘No, sir,’ I replied, ‘but I had “rat-stoppers” put on all the shore lines.’

‘I saw them,’ remarked Hester; ‘the things like gigantic mushrooms strung on ropes.’

‘Well,’ said the Captain, ‘I knew the ship had rats on board, for I remember seeing a lot of them when I was at the Gilbert Islands last year. In fact, a Chinaman came on board at Butaritari expressly to catch them. I asked him what he wanted them for, and he said, “Me muchee tired grub here; tucker allee samee every day; me wantee little muttuns—new bland.” I hoped, at any rate, that we hadn’t any of the Sydney brand of rats on this passage, but it looks as if we had.’

We all three remained silent and thoughtful during the remainder of the meal; for the incident, to say the least, was a suggestive one, sailing, as we were, from a plague-infected port.

I went on deck and relieved Cassidy; and shortly afterwards the skipper joined me on the quarter deck, where I was seeing fresh serving put on one of the toppinglifts.

‘My girl,’ said he, ‘has been telling me that, even now, our best plan is to get rid of the rats, in case it is indeed plague which is killing them off in this odd fashion.’

‘Very good, sir,’ I answered. ‘Shall I get the boy and two or three of the hands to make an organised raid upon them?’

‘Do so,’ replied the Skipper, ‘but my daughter says the rats should be handled as little as possible, because of their fleas jumping from them to you, as they are said to be the carriers of the mischief.’

This rat hunt was duly carried out. We caught a good many, and they were mostly easy to catch, their weakness and tameness being dreadful to behold. A good many were discovered dead. We also tried burning sulphur down below—probably doing no great good thereby.

Nevertheless, it is pleasant to feel you are doing something; just as on shore many worthy women appear to get great inward peace, when they have infectious disease in their houses, by placing saucers filled with Condyl's Fluid about the sick-room.

Some days of noble sailing passed away. The little packet lay her course, bowed to her covering board. Her sails were dark with spray, as the shapely fabric swung over the seas elbowing her liquid way towards the East. It must have been about the tenth of April, or perhaps a little later. We were now in lat. 43° south, and in long. $167^{\circ} 40'$ W. I had the morning watch. We had finished washing down. The sun was already eleven or twelve degrees up, and flung a whitish scintillating glare all over the eastern horizon. Elsewhere the sea ran in an unbroken circle of sparkling blue.

The wind and sea were just forward of the beam, and the rows of surges ran in endless processions, to which we curtsied with the grace and liveliness which come of perfect lines and splendid trim.

The little galley funnel smoked cheerfully, and the fragrance of frying bacon came aft to my nostrils with a relish born of good health and crisp sea air. Presently Hester came on deck. What shall I say of her as her dear face appeared above the companion?

Like a sailor, she took in the ship, the sea, the sky, looked aloft, to windward, and then turned towards me, smiling, fresh, and sweet; her face flushed with health and the pouring of the wind out of the hollow of the great mainsail; her hair shining and sparkling as the shadow of the canvas came and went with the rhythmical swing of the ship.

From what I have already said you will gather that I had had many opportunities of seeing her.!

The close companionship of a small vessel; the fact that we were both young (she was twenty-three); and a common liking for the picturesque side of seafaring drew us together.

The men were forward at various little jobs, the sails needed no trimming, and I fell very easily into talk with this girl, whose radiant presence was daily making irremediable inroads on my peace of mind.

Hitherto I had remained fancy free. The poor profession of the sea, and perhaps a somewhat sorrowful temperament, had kept me out of the way of women folk, and certainly immune to their attractions. But here, at sea, even had I wished, I could not fly away from my ever-increasing danger.

We walked over to windward and sat down on the top of the little house.

‘Father is still asleep,’ she began. ‘He has been so worried over the rats dying. I was half sorry I told him what I did, for after all their deaths may be due to some cause other than plague. What do animals die of, Mr. Blackburne?’

‘I don’t know,’ I said. ‘I suppose much the same ailments as we have—save worry. No wonder alligators

and unintellectual beasts of that kind live long ; their nervous systems are too simple to get deranged ; they might go on for ever—bar violence and hunger.'

'Yes,' she answered, 'I expect you are right. Sir Andrew Clark, the great London doctor, told father some years ago that "work never killed people ; it was always worry." Now you must help me to keep my father from fretting over the question of plague.'

Then our talk turned on other matters, and time slipped swiftly away.

'Seven bells' was struck. Alf, the boy, came on deck and said :

'Captain wushes me to s'y, with 'is comperiments, that 'e ain't dressed yet, and that 'e reckons 'e won't be on deck afore brekfus. Miss Leigh, mum, yer father wushes to see yer.'

Hester went below and quickly reappeared.

'Oh, Mr. Blackburne,' she said, 'Father wants you to take sights without waiting for him. I'll take the time for you—you may trust me,' she added with a smile, 'as I have done it many times before. Father has tried to teach me a little navigation, and I can take an altitude fairly correctly.'

I got out my sextant, Hester went to the chronometer, and in due course the observation was completed.

This ended, I hove the log. Hardly had these necessary duties of navigation been attended to when I saw Martin Johnston, the old man-of-war sailor of whom I have already spoken, coming along the deck, evidently full of something.

I do not know why a presentiment of evil should

have come to my mind, but, somehow, my thought forestalled the evil news the old man had to give.

Johnston was a privileged person on board the *Pandora*. He had been a bluejacket in the navy, and had known the Skipper in his early years when in Her Majesty's service. After finishing his period of service he had come across his old officer during the latter's career in the mercantile marine and had sailed with him. Martin, therefore, had known Hester pretty well all her life, and took the deepest interest in her. As I said before, he was a prime sailor of a rapidly-vanishing type.

The old man came up to where I stood, and I could see at a glance that there was trouble in his eye.

'Well, Johnston, is there anything wrong?' I asked.

'Yes, Mr. Blackburne, I'm afeard there is a lot amiss.'

'Well, let's hear it.'

'It's this, sir: Jim Simpson—'e's in Mr. Cassidy's watch—'e's been terrible ill all night; and since eight bells in the middle watch 'e's been worse. 'E seems to me to be pretty bad.'

'What is he complaining of?'

''E's got a powerful 'eadache, and 'e's throwing up some, and 'e says 'e's pains all over just the same 's if 'e'd got a regular 'ammerin'.'

'All right, Johnston,' I replied. 'The Captain hasn't been on deck this morning, and won't be until after breakfast. I'll report it to him, and he'll see Simpson as soon as possible.'

'Very good, sir,' answered the seaman, as he returned forward.

Mr. Cassidy came to relieve me and I gave him the news. He looked grave as he said :

‘ Begorra, that’s bad intoirely.’

The breakfast bell rang, and with a good deal of foreboding I went below and made my report to Captain Leigh.

CHAPTER VII

WE LOSE A MAN

A HEAD wind and other nautical annoyances make greetings curt and dry at times on board ship. Nor did my report of sickness forward sweeten matters.

Breakfast, therefore, was not a cheerful meal that morning, and it was quickly finished.

‘Father,’ said Hester, ‘I’ve found something among my belongings which may be of use to us.’

‘What is it, Child?’ said her father, his gloom melting as he turned towards his girl.

‘During the plague scare a Sydney professor published a pamphlet on plague to give ordinary people a common-sense view of the situation. I got one—why or how I forget, and how it came on board I don’t know. But here it is. And it seems written in simple language “to be understood of the people.”’

Her father was soon immersed in its perusal, and I went on deck to let the second mate get his breakfast.

Alf Nash, the boy, emerged from the forecastle and came aft. His clothes, the set of his cap, the

cut of the trousers, and his high-heeled boots all made him the 'compleat larrikin.' Even the sea could not wash it out of him. A *Bulletin* artist would have revelled in committing him to paper.

'Alf,' I sang out, 'come here.' I suspected he had been loafing. 'What were you doing below?'

'I wanted to get my knife, sir, I did.'

I knew the boy had some other object, so I said—

'You young scamp, you know that's not true.'

'Gawd's truth, sir, it is a fack; yet I'll allow it ain't all the truth. S'elp me, I wanted to have a look at Jim Simpson.'

'What the deuce did you want to see him for?'

'It's this w'y, sir: Hi've bin that orfen in 'orspital that I seems a bit of a hammyturo doctor meself,' and he cocked his cross-jack eye till I shook with laughter.

You couldn't really be angry with the boy. He was a pure Arab, and acted after the manner of his kind. Moreover, he was honest and faithful in the main, and one couldn't help liking him, whilst as to amusement—he was an absolutely unconscious comic artist of the first water.

'I suppose you wanted to diagnose the case.'

'Yes, that's about hit, sir. I wanted to dognose the chap's hailment. That's the reg'lar 'orspital word. I sees ye knows hit. Been there yerself, sir?'

'And what did you make of it, Alf?'

'It's w'ot they calls a differcult case, it is. A kind o' combination of diseases, Mr. Blackburne. Fust of all 'e's got the dry belly-hache for sartain. I knows

'o has, for I've 'ad it meself arter a feed o' geebungs.* But that ain't all. 'E's got pains 'ere and there all over the shop. A kinder spotted rheumatiz I calls it.'

'Good Lord,' said I, 'what is spotted rheumatism?'

'There ain't no herruption with that hailment. I reckons it's this w'y. W'en a cove's down on 'is huppers, and 'is shirt and pants is too well vintilated, and 'e's, say, loyin' in the hopen (Domain-dossin', I means), the hatmosphere there's a bit searchin', finds out the cracks in the clothes, and ye gets the rheumatiz where the hair strikes hin. That's w'ot I calls spotted rheumatiz.'

Alf Nash's further opinions on poor Simpson's condition were cut short by the arrival of the Skipper on deck. He went forward to see the sick man.

In a few minutes he sent for me to join him.

I dropped down into the little triangular den which was the living room of our small company.

An upright ladder led into a dimly-lighted space, which vanished into obscurity towards the eyes of the ship.

However, in the matter of light, she was better off than most vessels of her class, for she was fitted with two glass deck-lights and a couple of fixed ports on each side.

But the ventilation was only through the scuttle, and hence the air was stagnant and close, and full of an indescribable mixture of smells.

Damp clothing, kerosene, tobacco smoke, and human beings tightly packed, all went to make an odour neither sweet nor wholesome.

* A small, indigestible berry eaten by children in New South Wales.

There were eight berths in this fore-castle, and in the after lower bunk on the starboard side lay the sick man.

The little dark interior was lively and resonant with the sense of buoyant liftings and sinkings, of crushed seas and hurrying foam, while the dim light became greenish at times when the schooner dipped her bows to meet the kiss of the Pacific.

Inside, the creak and groan of timbers, the endless little sounds which came from the hold, and the rustle of spectral oilskins, as they swung to and fro, all made one of those strange and impressive pictures of marine life which sink into the eye and ear, and etch themselves on the memory for evermore.

The seaman was obviously grievously ill.

'How do you feel, my man?' asked the Skipper.

'Very weak, sir,' replied the sailor. 'I'm orf my tucker, got a bad 'ead, and 'as pains all over me.'

His temperature was high, his tongue thickly furred, his breathing hurried; he complained of much pain in his right groin, and he had a sore shin.

The Captain examined his groin. There was a little tender swelling. The skin wound on his shin was red and angry-looking.

'How did you get that?' I asked, pointing to the sore on his leg.

'When I was down in the lazaretto the other day 'untin' them rats, I hits my leg agin an empty case.'

'Was it a clean case? Your sore looks as if you had got some dirt into it.'

'Maybe I did, sir,' said he.

The man went on to describe the case on which he

barked his shin. From his account the rats had evidently used it for the dual purpose of a lying-in chamber and sepulchre combined.

Captain Leigh and I returned on deck and discussed the man's sickness. The Skipper's mind was evidently full of the pamphlet on plague which he had just digested.

'Look over what the professor says about the disease,' said he, handing me the booklet.

I read rapidly while he walked up and down. By and by he stopped.

'Well, what do you think of it. The description tallies fairly well, doesn't it? Plague port—rats die—man gets sick—has handled the beasts—gets a wound on leg—swollen glands—ill generally. Pretty suspicious combination, eh?'

I had reluctantly to admit that the evidence in favour of plague was very strong.

Hester now joined us, and her father described the man's condition, and asked her how she read the riddle.

'I'm afraid it is plague, father. But, of course, with the sore on the leg, and the swollen tender glands, it might be simple blood-poisoning. Still I think I would do here as they would in a hospital if the doctors weren't sure of the disease.'

'Well, child,' said her father, 'what would they do?'

'They would take all the precautions which experience shows to be best on the assumption that it is plague. If it turns out that it's something else—say blood-poisoning—all the better; the precautions can do no harm. Suppose you turn that big cargo boat

into a hospital, and clear out and disinfect the fore-castle.'

'Excellent suggestion,' said her father. 'I shall certainly have it done.'

This cargo boat was quite a big craft. We carried it for lightering freight and stores, and for use at the guano island. It was stowed in chocks on the top of the main hatch, just abaft the galley.

We put its contents elsewhere, fixed a sleeping-place in the bottom, and spread an awning over it, using a ridge-pole from stem to stern.

This we could easily do, as the boat had a great sheer. The after end we left uncovered.

We next stripped the fore-castle of its contents, sent everybody and everything on deck, and then shut it up with sulphur burning in it for twenty-four hours.

If this fumigation did nothing else, possibly it killed the fleas, of which pest the men had lately complained. Having done all these things we heartened up the sailors and hoped for the best.

Hester now took charge of the sick man. She insisted that it was only her clear duty.

'I have learned something of nursing,' she said: 'moreover, if it be plague, as it probably is, I run less risk than the others, for I was inoculated in Sydney during the early part of the scare.'

Her father began to demur, but she said:

'Now, Father, don't refuse me. You know well it's my duty. You wouldn't respect me if I didn't "take on the job," as Alf Nash would say.'

Her father's face was a study. Pride in his

daughter and fear for her safety could be read as clearly in his varying expression as if he had spoken his inmost thoughts.

‘Very well,’ said Miss Leigh, ‘I’ll go on duty now, and I’ll take Alf Nash as assistant nurse, and we’ll split the twenty-four hours between us. He’s a handy boy, and Mr. Blackburne tells me he rather fancies he knows a thing or two in medicine—above all, he has also been inoculated.’

Captain Leigh shrugged his shoulders, and turned away. His daughter smiled across to me and said :

‘My dear old dad thinks of everyone but himself. He is always in terror in case I get ill or am hurt. I wish he would think more of himself and less of me.’

Thus passed the day. Miss Leigh reported at night that the patient was worse, if anything. She had given him what medicine our circumstances admitted of.

During the night the indefatigable Alf Nash was on duty in charge of the sick man. ‘Night Sooperintendent I reckons meself,’ he informed Martin. The old sailor replied tartly : ‘You be off to your dooties, my Wexford-street* Dook, or I’ll whack the stuffin’ out o’ yer.’ However, the boy turned out a perfect brick, and was kindness itself to the dying sailor. For it was evident, even to Cassidy and myself, that his hours were numbered.

During the night I went several times to be sure that Simpson wanted for nothing, and Miss Leigh came on deck a couple of times, but we always found Alf Nash awake, and—this, however, was chronic

* One of the lowest streets in Sydney.

with him—very much inclined for conversation. He was evidently a young man who had tried ‘to warm both hands before the fire of life’ and found it a very chilly blaze. Moreover, he had usually occupied a back seat in the room. But he had tried to make the best of it.

The second time Hester came on deck, she said to him :

‘Alf, when you were so terribly ill, after you were “busted agin the ’urdle,” did you think you would recover?’

‘Well, Miss, a missionary bloke what comes about “the Rocks,” he were allus on the “faith racket.” And I sez to meself as I lies in bed with a dashed leaky ’ead — “Gawd’s truth,” I sez, “’ere’s a bloomin’ chance for faith. The doctor says I’ll recover, and garn me if I don’t.” And ’ere I am,’ he added, with an air of success that made us laugh in spite of our sad surroundings.

‘Yus, lydy,’ he continued. ‘Tork about faith! It minds me of suthin’ I ’eard when I was sick that very time you’re askin’ me about.

‘It was this w’y :—One night an old Scotch cove was a-lyin’ in the next bed to me. A fair cooker ’e was. I reckon he was just about peggin’ hout. His missis was a-sittin’ by ’im. By and by the ’ouse doctor comes in, and ’e ’as a good look at the poor covey.

““Is there any ’opes?” sez the old girl. “None whatever,” sez the doctor, “in fack, your good man’s just dyin’; yer may say in a manner ’e’s dead.”

‘Gor blime me, Miss, if the sick bloke didn’t sit up in bed. ’E did—’s true ’s I’m tellin’ ye.

“No, doctor,” sez he, “no exackly dead yet.”

“Sit doon, Jock, sit doon,” sez ’is missis; “the doctor maun ken best.”’

‘Now I calls that faith. “Believin’ agin the evidence,” as I ’eard the Beak say in the Water Perlice Court.’

As the hours passed poor Simpson got steadily worse. He lost consciousness about daybreak, and lay with half-opened eyes, and a brown crackled tongue, muttering incoherencies. He died about noon of the same day.

As we felt almost certain that the malady of which he died was plague, we determined to bury him as soon as possible.

We wrapped him in his blanket, and marled him down in it. It seemed folly to prolong contact with the living by sewing him up in canvas, ship-shape fashion. I take it that a man sleeps as well in his last toss whichever way he goes dressed.

The schooner was braced sharp up on the port tack and was bursting through a lumpy sea, with a good deal of motion; so at four o’clock we hauled in our weather braces, laid the topsail to the mast, half-masted the ensign, and let her jog along quietly.

I had seen a number of funerals at sea, but always in large ships with a great company—never in a small vessel with a few. Nor, as in this case, where the circumstances of the death were so full of dread and menace to those who were left.

There was so much water knocking about in the waist, that the Skipper told us to bring the body right aft. The boy and I placeed the body upon a

plank, covered it with the spare ensign, and laid one end on the rail and the other on an empty cask. Captain Leigh came to the edge of the raised quarter-deck and read the burial service.

He read well, and with feeling. The picture was one, indeed, to strike the dullest eye and heart.

The little vessel, arrested as it were in her mid-ocean course with the sea emblem of trouble blowing out in one spot of flame, not inappropriately symbolised the termination of the life of the poor seaman we were about to launch into the dark places of the deep.

The smallness of the fabric, the immensity of the surrounding sea and sky, the loneliness and helplessness of human beings in the presence of nature and of death, stirred the emotions, and turned one's thoughts from the vanity of earthly things to the belief and hope in an hereafter.

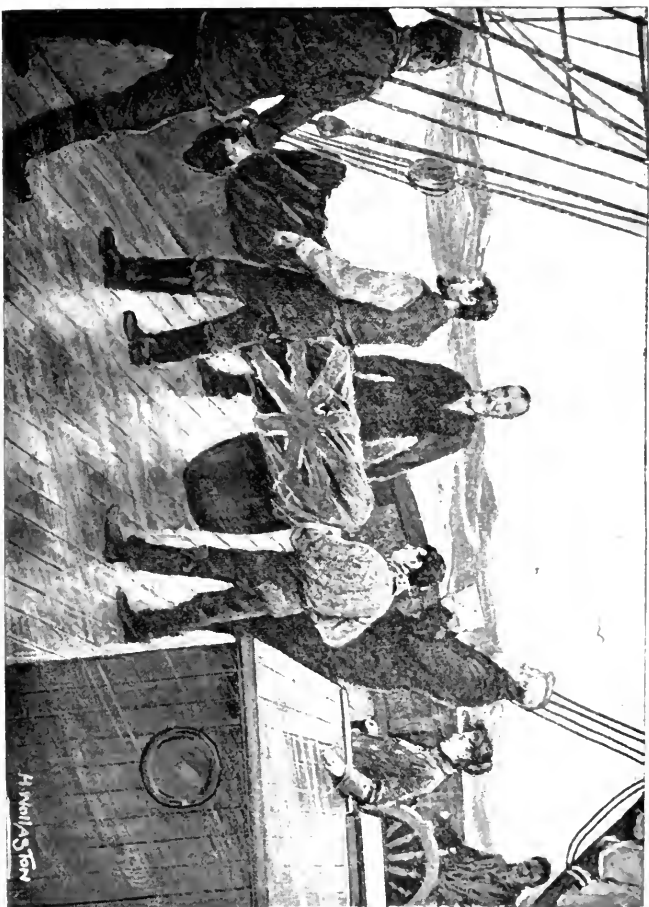
It is the peculiar happiness of the Church of England to possess a burial service, the pathetic sweetness of which can never be wholly marred by the most ignorant or unsympathetic reader.

In this case the earnest and musical voice of the Captain gave a deeper meaning to those words of sorrow and of hope with which we committed our poor shipmate to the element whereon he had toiled and suffered.

Oh! the pathos of a seaman's life! 'Prisoners of the ocean.' A hard lot! A hopeless prospect! And what had been the fortune of this poor fellow? A life of hardship; a chest of worn-out clothes; and a toss overboard at the finish!

In such fashion does the Mistress of the Seas
reward those who make our national greatness. Truly
indeed—

Beneath no stone or trophy, beneath no minster tower,
Lie those who gave her empire, who stretched her arm to power,
Below those markless pathways, where commerce shapes the trail,
Unsung, unrun, forgotten, sleeps the Sailor of the Sail.



THERE WAS SO MUCH WATER KNOCKING ABOUT IN THE WAIST THAT THE SKIPPER TOLD US TO
BRING THE BOOY RIGHT AFT

CHAPTER VIII

FRESH TROUBLES OVERTAKE US

FOR the next two days or thereabouts we had calms and head winds.

Trimming sail, eating and sleeping, and making no progress, was a condition which some time passed in steam did not allow me to accept with the resignation of our fathers in the days of tacks and sheets.

In these leisurely old times a handful of degrees east or west did not seem greatly to trouble them. The era of the twenty-two knotter and a large coal consumption had not yet come.

No doubt the physical hardships of the sea are now greatly less.

Scurvy, starvation, and thirst are little heard of. Yet, so far as a profession goes, the prospects of the sea officer are not so good now as they were in the days of John Company.

The commander of a large ship in those times had a fair career before him, and his chances of snatching a competence from the waters were infinitely greater than now fall to the brass-bound deity of the bridge, who conducts a marine Pullman car from port to port.

On the evening of the 16th April, two of the men in the second mate's watch complained of feeling sick, and had bad headaches.

One was Olaf, the Swede, and the other was Jones, poor Simpson's chum.

Neither of them was able to be on deck during the night. In my watch there were myself, Martin Johnston, and McKeowen, the New Zealand lad.

Mr. Cassidy's watch was thus very short-handed, for out of his crowd there only remained Jack, the Sandwich Islander. I therefore let him have McKeowen, while I took Alf Nash. This made three in each watch. Cassidy and I took a wheel in rotation with the men.

Undermanned as ships go nowadays, it is especially in small craft that the loss of two or three of your tiny crowd makes so marked a difference.

Morning came, and the men were no better—nay, they were worse. Later on, the boy found swellings in their groins or armpits, I forget which; and we were finally satisfied that the dread disease was on board the *Pandora*.

Neither of these men had angry sores on their limbs like Simpson, which fact, in his case, had made us half hope that he had died of simple blood poisoning. Two more distressful days of suffering passed by, when about sundown, within an hour of each other, death released them both from further misery. That same night we hurriedly buried them.

We were all now feeling rather worn-out with worry, so, as the barometer was inclined to fall, and the weather generally looked uncertain, we shortened sail.

We took in the top-gallant-sail, reefed the top-sail, hauled down the outer jib and fore-stay-sail, and put two reefs in the mainsail. We also bent a trysail and stowed the foresail altogether. When all that work was finished we reckoned the vessel well snugged down and prepared for contingencies.

At daylight the wind had freshened and the sky looked very dirty, and, moreover, the wind was dead on end for our port. To make matters worse, Jack, the Sandwich Islander, came aft and began talking wild nonsense about ghosts, which he said he had seen sitting on the gunwale of the cargo boat.

Hester took his temperature, and our hearts fell as she told us it was 103·8. He breathed hurriedly and coughed somewhat. It was now a question what was best to be done.

Captain Leigh asked Cassidy and me to come below and talk over matters. Of course, as he was both owner and master, the matter was a less difficult one than if he had been merely sailing the vessel in the interests of someone else.

On the cabin table he spread out a chart of the South Pacific.

‘We are here,’ said he, pointing to where he had pricked off the ship’s position, ‘in 38° 10’ South, and 134° 30’ West.

‘You see,’ he added, ‘how far we still are from our destined port.’

Neither of us made any remark. It was plainly a position in which we felt that the master should take the initiative. Indeed I felt sure that Captain Leigh had already made up his mind.

‘This plague is truly a bad business,’ said he. ‘Here, already, we have lost three men and we have a fourth laid up—presumably with the same malady. It is unhappily quite probable that our strength may even yet be further reduced. It seems to me, therefore, bitterly as I regret it, necessary to abandon the voyage. The immediate object I had in view, the investigation of the guano island, is already obviously frustrated, and I am consequently of opinion that it is unwise to persevere.’

‘Where would you propose going to, sir?’ I asked.

‘New Zealand I put aside,’ he replied. ‘It lies, as you see, over two thousand miles to the westward; and, as you know, with the westerly winds down here, it would be an endless job to get back.’

‘Quite so,’ I answered, ‘but I understood you intended ultimately going to Samoa.’

‘I am coming to that at once,’ replied the Captain. ‘Even if the winds served, it would utterly ruin the objects of the voyage if I returned to Dunedin or Wellington, whereas the wind is now fair to go anywhere north. If I let her make a fair wind of it we shall be picking up the South East Trades in a few days and get to Samoa without any great difficulty, shorthanded as we are.’

‘Yes, sorr,’ said Cassidy, ‘and we might pick up a few hands in one of them oilands, and make a shape for the manure counthry afther all.’

Captain Leigh smiled and looked rather pleased with the suggestion.

‘Well, Cassidy,’ he said, ‘I don’t know. We’ll see

how things go with us. We've got to get to Apia first of all, anyway.'

'How shall we stand, sir, as regards quarantine?' I asked.

'Well, Blackburne,' he answered, 'I think it will pan out in this fashion. If we have disease still on board—which God forbid—we shall, of course, have to comply with the full requirements of the local regulations. But, on the other hand, if no more cases appear by the time we reach Apia, so many days of freedom from trouble will have passed that we may escape all, or nearly all, detention. Of course we shall have to be officially disinfected.'

I made a move to go on deck.

'Wait a moment,' he said, 'I wish to enter the details of this consultation in the official log and get you two officers to sign it.'

This was now done, and Cassidy returned on deck.

'We may as well lay off her course for Apia before you go,' said the Skipper.

We returned to the chart. He bent over it and laid the parallel rulers on the paper.

'N.W. by W. will do for the present,' he said; 'let her fall off to that.'

I went on deck, and presently the schooner was making a fair wind of it, and we were on our course for Samoa.

During the day the wind and sea increased so much that we reluctantly had to heave her to, which we did under her fore trysail, with her head to the nor'ard.

Jack, the sick man, was giving us a good deal of trouble—far more than the other poor fellows. We

had got him into bed, but he was very restless, muttering and talking incessantly.

Hester was quite the good angel of the ship, busying herself with many kind deeds and words. Hopeful and cheery to her father, devoted to the sick man, my eyes followed her as she went about the decks, and I whispered inly that 'this was the one maid for me,' if only I were spared to win her.

The buoyant schooner rode easily, taking only an occasional heavy spray. Had she made worse weather of it, I suppose we should have had to move Jack out of the cargo-boat elsewhere into shelter.

Perhaps if we had done so the dreadful tragedy which happened that evening—all in a breath, as one might say—might never have occurred.

At six o'clock Cassidy came on deck with McKeowen. The weather remained unchanged, and there was really nothing much to do, except to see that Jack didn't get into any mischief, as his delirium was distinctly on the increase.

We learned later what now took place.

The second mate was aft, close to the companion-way, which opened out of the starboard end of the deck-house; McKeowen was forward in the galley; the cook had gone below. While in the galley the New Zealander heard Jack get out of the boat. He put his head outside the galley door and saw him stealthily pick up a belaying pin from the fife-rail and begin to crawl aft, apparently with some dire intent.

McKeowen made a run and a spring at the bulky figure of the Sandwich Islander, at the same time shouting a warning to Cassidy.

Poor Jack, with the fire of delirium strong upon him, closed with the lad, and they became locked in a desperate struggle.

The shout and the fall of the two startled the second mate, who rushed forward to find that, in the brief space of time which had elapsed, the huge Kanaka had dealt a crushing blow to the poor lad, and was now advancing on himself, who was wholly unarmed.

The poor fellow closed with his maddened assailant as quickly and as gamely as he could, but too late to avoid receiving a heavy stroke, which must have injured his fighting powers.

It is indeed largely guesswork to know what actually did take place, for McKeowen, after we picked him up, could only give a general idea of the desperate moments which preceded our rush on deck. But events must have progressed swiftly, for, before the few remaining members of the crew reached the spot, the battle had gone badly with poor Cassidy. You may grasp what our feelings must have been when we reached the deck just in time to see the two combatants, both weaponless, stagger against the low rail, over-balance, and, locked in each other's grasp, plunge overboard into the mountainous sea, which the drifting vessel then breasted.

To lower a boat was impossible as well as futile. It was the early night of the Southern autumn, and we could not see ten fathoms away from the ship's side. Nor, indeed, could one expect that the combatants remained afloat, twined in so deadly a grip. Nor did any shout signify that one or other yet survived.

We found poor McKeowen lying against the main rigging, conscious, but with what we sadly feared was the sweat of death upon him.

‘My God, my boy, what happened?’ I could not help asking.

‘Jack was mad, and he started to run amuck, and I tried to stop him. He’s finished me,’ groaned the wounded man.

We carried him below into the second mate’s berth, where we examined his injuries, and there Hester washed and bound up the ghastly cut on his head.

‘That’s nothing, Miss,’ said the poor chap; ‘it’s here where I’m bad,’ and he pointed towards the abdomen. ‘Jack jammed me against the spindle of the gypsy winch, and I’m sure it’s bursted me somewhere inside. Oh, the pain!’

Miss Leigh gave him an injection of morphia, and we made him as comfortable as we could.

He complained dreadfully of the movement of the ship, so we chocked him off with pillows in such fashion that he couldn’t shift.

Miss Leigh thought that he was bleeding internally, for he became of a waxen paleness as the night wore on, and his sighs were unspeakably pathetic to hear.

There was nothing more to do, and I went on deck and spent the night talking to the Skipper, and watching the drift of the ship.

Once or twice I went below to get food, and to see if I could help Hester. She spent the hours of darkness by poor McKeowen’s side, and once I heard him ask her to sing to him.

‘What shall I sing?’

‘Oh, sing “Abide with Me,”’ said the lad.

I listened a moment as, low and sweet, her rich voice rose and fell with the words of the hymn. Every now and then the thunder of the wind and the groan of tortured timber drowned the voice of the singer, but I felt that the dying sailor lost nothing of it, and that his last hours were made easier and were cheered by the gentle presence and soft voice of this girl, to whose sympathy suffering could never appeal in vain.

He died about daylight.

CHAPTER IX

CAPTAIN LEIGH HAS A PRESENTIMENT

WHEN morning came the first thing I did was to wash away the red stains about the starboard main-rigging.

I next went to rouse up the cook to make coffee for all hands ; he looked very queer.

‘Hullo, Cook,’ said I, in a cheery voice, ‘are you off colour?’

‘Just a bit, sir, but nothing to signify. I ’ad a bad night—couldn’t sleep no ’ow. I’ll ’ave a bit o’ fire burnin’ in a minute. A drink of ’ot cawfee ’ull set us all up.’

I said no more, but I didn’t like the look of the man. He was a pretty tough customer, was the ‘Doctor,’ and he wouldn’t look ill if he wasn’t feeling pretty seedy.

Of the ship’s company of twelve, our complement when we left New South Wales, there remained now only six souls—the Captain, his daughter, Martin Johnston, the cook, the boy, and myself. However, there was no use brooding over past misfortunes ; and happily work kept our minds occupied.

By eight o'clock the sky had cleared somewhat, and, there being a good horizon, we got sights for longitude; but we had only an approximate latitude to work them up with.

A strong gale still blew, and a high sea rolled unpityingly towards our storm-beaten little ship.

At noon we got a good meridian altitude, and the latitude so obtained gave us the means wherewith to bring the morning sights up to the mid-day position.

Captain Leigh and I went below to work out these observations, and, having done so, we pricked off the ship's position together.

We placed her in latitude $36^{\circ} 25'$ S., and longitude $136^{\circ} 30'$ W.

The Skipper rolled up the chart and put his pencil and dividers on the rack. He kept a brave face, but it was easy to see that the iron of misfortune had entered very deeply into him. He looked ashy, worn, and aged as he began to talk about the troubles which had befallen us. He then went on to other matters.

'Look here, Blackburne,' said he, 'I have not known you very long. How long is it, by the bye?'

'Less than three months, sir.'

'Well, well, is that all? Circumstances ripen men's trust in one another, and this voyage has been a veritable hot-house for letting us understand each other quickly; "for occasions do not make a man weak, but they show him what he is." Do you understand what I mean? I think "occasions" have shown me that you are strong. I am satisfied that I did right

to trust you. You have pleased me in many ways, and I believe my first judgment of you was correct.'

I felt satisfied that I had his good opinion. But I think I fidgeted a good deal on my chair as he addressed me; I didn't quite know what he was driving at, so I merely said:

'I have tried to do my best. Besides, I am grateful to you, sir. I was beginning not to know which way to turn when you came across me in Sydney.'

'I am going to bore you,' he continued, 'with some of my private and family affairs. I do so because I have confidence in your character as a man of honour, and in your ability as a seaman. Life is very uncertain with any of us just now. I may be the next to die. Indeed, I have a strong presentiment that I shall be. And it is that feeling which makes me open my heart to you, a comparative stranger, and call on your honour and skill to act for me, if it please God that I should die. You understand why? I should leave a hostage to fortune in your keeping—my girl. It is the thought that she may be left alone which gives bitterness to death. Yes, that thought alone,' he added with emphasis.

'Don't lay any weight on presentiments,' I replied as cheerfully as I could. 'Why, sir, in a desperate time such as this anyone may have such fancies. I don't suppose the coolest brain could think quite normally—sanely, if you like—with the uncertainty of our fate so clearly and closely in evidence.'

'Perhaps so, my boy,' said the old Captain. 'Nevertheless I have had my presentiment, and it was a very plain one. And, with its influence strong upon me, I

have broken through the natural reserve which has always been dominant in me to ask you to promise that, whatever may befall, you will play the man of honour, and the skilful seaman, for the sake of my unprotected girl.'

I held out my hand and he took it and wrung it tightly.

'By heaven, sir,' I exclaimed, 'I give you my word I will.'

'It is enough, Blackburne,' he interrupted. 'I trust you—you have eased my mind greatly.'

He then went on to other matters, and told me something of his life and career.

'My father,' said he, 'was a well-to-do squire in the Midlands, and my elder brother at this moment reigns in his stead.'

'I began my sea life in the Navy, but I left it in disgust—perhaps I was precipitate—youth and impatience you know! Anyway I thought I had a grievance—unfair treatment at the hands of a superior. My father was very angry over my resigning, and I didn't sweeten his temper when I married my cousin, the penniless daughter of the rector who held the family living.'

'How did you shake down into the Merchant Service after ten years in the Navy, sir?' I asked.

'Not very well at first. And my wife, poor girl, had a pretty bad time of it till I got command. Fortunately I had a little money independently of my father, and with that we made both ends meet. However, to make a long story short, I got a ship at last—a sailing ship. Oddly enough I have never commanded a steamer.'

‘It was easier to take my wife to sea in sail than even in a steam tramp. I never tried to get into a mail service.’

‘Miss Leigh was born at sea?’ I interrupted.

‘Yes. On the way to New Zealand. We left her in England very often. My wife’s sister brought her up. Mrs. Leigh died when the child was very young. It was an awful blow to me. She was a brave woman, and never complained. You know what a cursed poor business sailing is. She didn’t lie soft for many a day. It was only in recent years, when I settled in the colony, and took to trading in little craft of my own, that I became independent. The bitterness to me is, that prosperity came too late for her to share it.’

His voice shook and he turned away.

‘Yes,’ he continued, ‘and when I got my girl out to Sydney and hoped to have a home at last, asthma sends me to sea. I’ll make a nice albatross some day, won’t I? *

‘My girl,’ he continued presently, ‘is wilful in some things, and she wouldn’t be left alone on shore. Truth to tell, I was only too easily persuaded to take her with me.’

‘I’m sure I don’t blame you,’ I blurted out, and then felt inclined to bite my tongue.

Just the faintest gleam of a smile passed over my companion’s face, but he said nothing, and I was about to go on deck when he spoke again.

‘Let me see,’ said he, ‘have I said all I intended to

* Referring to the seamen’s superstition that deceased sailors’ spirits inhabit the bodies of oceanic birds.

say to you? Wait a minute, Blackburne; there are one or two other matters I wish to mention.

‘Now, if I should die, I advise you to carry out this voyage later on. I am convinced that there is a fortune in that guano island. I have been making some additions to my will. I leave certain discretionary powers to John, James, and John, my lawyers, giving you a share in the results of the venture, provided you take an active part in its development.’

As I thanked him for his generosity, he interrupted me again.

‘Yes, there is one other matter,’ said he. ‘Martin Johnston has stuck to me through adversity and prosperity. My daughter knows my wishes about him. See that you help her in making the old chap’s days easy to him. I think these are all the things I had on my mind.’

Thus terminated this curious interview.

I rose to go, and was half through the cabin door when the Captain stood up, and it seemed as if he were going to add something further. But he stopped irresolute, and I waited a moment and wondered, and then he spoke (but it was as if he only said the end of a sentence, and left the other part unuttered)—‘and see you be always good to my girl,’ were the words I heard.

These were the very words. I turned them over in my mind, but it needed a woman’s wit, long afterwards, to tell me what had been the unspoken thoughts of her father.

The Captain shortly after joined me on deck, where

there was an improvement in the look of the weather.

This fact, combined with our own impatience, tempted us to make sail, and get her going with the wind, which had hauled south of east, well on the quarter.

Accordingly, between us, we managed to get the inner jib hoisted and sheeted home, and, as she paid off, I ran aloft and loosed the top-sail, which had been furled, reefed.

The Captain stayed at the wheel, the yards were squared, and with the halliards taken to the winch, the little ribbon of wet canvas slowly rose to the wind, which still blew with plenty of weight and spite, even though half its venom was apparently out of it when we got the ship fairly going.

We left the second jib and the fore trysail set, the former sheeted hard amidships.

I relieved the Skipper at four bells, and thereafter he, old Martin, and I relieved each other in turn.

We kept no regular lookout, but all hands lay about handy for a call.

That same evening the cook was so ill that we felt justified in taking him out of the forecabin and putting him in the cargo boat. The boy had previously given this unhopeful hospital a good cleaning.

The cook was a man who had played many parts in his time—carpenter, sailor, donkeyman, billiard marker, pew opener—‘everythink’ (as he put it) ‘short o’ bein’ a tectotaler.’

‘Yes,’ said he, ‘this here trip I reckons to be the tightest corner ill luck has shoved me into. ’Owever,

I'm game, you'll see. It's took a mighty big meat haxe to knock me hendways.'

'That's right, Cookie,' said Martin, 'you sticks to that and you'll be all right.'

'Wot bloomin' luxury,' he had the spirit to ejaculate, as he saw the bottom boards of the cargo boat and the newly-washed planking. 'Stooard,' added he, turning to the boy, 'bring hup my donkey's breakfast.'*

'Right,' said the urchin, ready to joke at any time. 'Any other orders, my lord?'

Anyway we fixed him up as dry and as comfortable as the windy deck of the flying schooner permitted. The boy saw to his requirements during the night.

So passed the sad hours. The wind took off a great deal during the night, and had we had more men, or even felt fresh ourselves, we would certainly have made more sail than the little band of topsail, under which she rolled towards her destination.

Early the following morning Miss Leigh came on deck to see how the cook had fared. The alert and loquacious Alf was at once in evidence.

'G'morning, Miss,' said he.

'How is the Cook?' asked Hester.

'Ow's Slushy. 'E's only middlin' bobbish. A bit off 'is happle; got a shingle short in 'is tork, I reckons. But he's wunderful well considerin'.'

Miss Leigh noted, with a nurse's eye, how deftly and tidily the little Arab had tended the sick man, and made the cheerless surroundings as cosy as possible.

* Sea slang for a sailor's mattress.

‘Well done, Alf; you’re quite a nurse,’ she said.

‘So I oughter be, mum,’ he replied; ‘haint I bin four times in ’orspital? The doctor, ’e said I were “a kind o’ reg’lar attendant, an’ made the institooshin a kind o’ club, as a change from the ‘Australia’ Hotel.” I larfs at this like anythink. “For Gord’s sake,” ses ’e to the Sister, “put a chin-bandage on this ’ere boy, or the top of ’is bloomin’ ’ead ’ll come orf. Boy,” sez ’e, “it aint safe fer you to larf—a peaceful smile is as much as you oughter risk. Consider the feelin’s o’ your frien’s.”

‘’E wur a reg’lar ’ard case, ’e wur, that doctor,’ continued Alf, but I didn’t hear any more of his reminiscences, as the wheel needed all the energies I had to expend.

CHAPTER X

WE REACH THE CLIMAX OF OUR MISFORTUNES

THE wind had again increased, and shifted a trifle more to the southward. The sea was very heavy, and the schooner needed constant attention. I had come on deck at four and seen the day break, with a high dawn, a red windy sky, and heavy clouds in rapid motion.

The picture was a very wild one, and doubly so it seemed to me when I looked at the empty silent decks and remembered the significance of their loneliness. The vessel seemed to have shrunk, dwarfed by comparison with the giant waves which chased her.

A big sea looks a very different thing when viewed from the thirty or forty foot bridge of a large steamer from what it appears from the low free-board of a small vessel.

Heavy rain squalls came up at times and blotted out the grey stormy water and wind-rent clouds.

My gloomy thoughts had a fit setting in the travail of the elements. However, the steering was enough to keep one's attention fixed on the ship, without admitting other causes of disquiet.

The seas, I noticed, ran less regularly, and I wished heartily that we had laid her to before they had increased to their present violence.

During the forenoon we took the cook below. There had been a good deal of water knocking about the deck, and the poor fellow kept saying that he was sure we would end by getting the decks swept.

This change increased the difficulty of nursing him, and the risks of infection from contact in a close space compared with the wind-swept but wholesome cargo-boat.

Throughout the day we towed a couple of oil-bags overboard, and I believe they laid the seas and that we ran drier.

It sounds easy and simple to write an account of this time, but I assure you, what with the pestilence, the weather, and our short-handedness, we had hard work to keep our hearts from despondency and the schooner right end uppermost !

During the afternoon the Captain was at the wheel. The wind now having drawn so much aft, combined with the trend of the sea, made us bear away so fully that it was well to square the yards and stow the trysail.

The Skipper called to me to get Martin and the boy and do what was required. He had hardly given me the order, when, in a moment, something happened, the gravity of which my nautical readers will appreciate.

To steer a small vessel before a heavy wind and sea needs much skill and judgment, a clear head, and absolutely good nerves.

Yet, be you ever so skilful, your whole 'trick' is 'one grinding monotony of peril, every spoke of the wheel a rash but obliged experiment, rash as a forlorn hope, needful as the leap which lands a fireman from a burning staircase.'

Much counts in the safe handling of the wheel in 'getting your hand in,' knowing the feel of the ship—in short, use and wont—a kind of reflex action taking place between the mind of a good helmsman and the lifting, swaying fabric he controls.

Well, the Skipper was worn out. I afterwards came to think that not improbably he was even then developing plague.

Coming up suddenly from rest or sleep to find oneself steering a vessel under the conditions in which the *Pandora* was fighting for her life would be no small trial to a young and hearty man, far less to one not very young, and anything but well.

I cannot say how it may have been, but I had hardly left him to see to getting the trysail stowed when I felt by the movement of the ship under my feet what was going to happen.

We lifted on a huge comber, the sea passed forward, and I daresay left the rudder but little immersed—I do not know—but this I do know, that she took one wild sheer to port with a tremendous roll to starboard, and round she came.

I heard the Captain shout something. I fancy it was to hold on for our lives.

I made a bound for the main rigging, and took in the fact that Martin was getting into the fore, and was already over the sheer-pole.

The boy I did not see. As it happened, he was, fortunately, below looking after the cook.

Above everything else in my mind there loomed the greenish grey bulk of a huge wave as it rolled on board over our port side.

I heard an awful crash, and saw the cargo boat lifted bodily up and smashed against the starboard rail, which also gave way.

A tremendous slatting and banging aloft told me what was going on there. We had, in fact, broached to, the topsail was aback, even though, at the time she came round, the yards were but little canted forwards.

The jerking and jumping of the spars, the furious thunder of the topsail and the jib, the sheet of which had parted, and above all the sudden weight and spite of the gale, which seemed to have doubled in volume (the result of us now lying more or less across its path), all made a most alarming state of affairs.

To be caught thus was, in effect, to have all the dangers of ordinary broaching to, plus the chance of immediate ruin from the pressure of the wind applied on the wrong side of the square sail yet set.

I turned my eyes from the menace aloft to the stern. I could nowhere see the Skipper.

The wheel, I saw, was partially broken, and, further, I saw that a small whaleboat which we kept lashed on the top of the deck-house had been shifted by the sea, and had smashed the binnacle.

Where was the Captain? I feared the worst. And the worst was realised!

God help poor Hester and comfort her! How could

we break it to her? It was only too plain that the great sea which had swept our decks had taken her father with it. I only marvelled that it had not swamped us out of hand.

Now a curious thing had happened. I told you that the trysail was still set when the catastrophe occurred.

We were just about to take it in, as the wind was so far aft that it no longer drew, and it was inclined to slat and blow about. Happily for us, we had not time to start any of its gear. As the poor sea-hunted vessel took her wild sheer round to port, the jib, which was sheeted flat aft, and the topsail, both filled on the port tack, with a terrific flap and jerk. The trysail stood the strain; but, as I've said, the jib went, and in a breath all that remained of it was a triangular patch at the head, the rest of the canvas blowing away in a cloud of dark-looking streamers.

To our comfort, and perhaps surprise, we found that the *Pandora* had hove herself to, with her head to the south'ard and west'ard, and, better still, was making good weather of it.

The yards, however, needed bracing up on the port tack, and this we could not do, because a dozen lengths of rent topsail had frapped themselves round mast and rigging till the yards were lashed immovably in their present wrong cant.

I therefore went aloft and cut and cleared the tough canvas. That done, we let the yard come down on the cap, and braced sharp up to the wind.

We next got the little whale-boat into its place on the deck-house, and lashed it securely.

In the middle of this strenuous work the cover of

the companion was thrust back, and Miss Leigh stood before us.

She had evidently been asleep, for one cheek was reddened as if by the pressure of the pillow, and her eyes were hollow with trouble.

None of us spoke for a moment. Indeed, I saw by the swift expression of agony which leapt into her face, that the broken rail, the wrecked steering gear, and her father's absence had told her, without speech from us, of the awful blow which the un pitying sea had just dealt her.

'And my father?' was all she said, as with upturned face and outstretched hands she stood looking towards old Martin and me, as we steadied ourselves against the side of the house.

I crossed over to where she stood and took her hand.

'Hester! I will tell you all about it another time,' I said. 'The schooner got out of hand in the steering, and your father was washed over. We never saw him again. Nor could we have saved him if we had. It all happened in a flash. Go below! What can I say to you? God comfort you!'

'Oh, my poor father! My poor father!' she moaned. She was standing so insecurely that she ran no small risk of tumbling overboard herself; so I insisted on her going to her room. She went; and we then set to work to get life-lines stretched along the deck, for the cargo-boat had made a great breach in what had now become the lee rail.

During the next two days the weather improved, but our misfortunes were not yet at an end.

The cook, it is true, held his own. He and the boy

seemed to possess an inexhaustible supply of cheerful spirits and funny experiences. The boy had youth and health to excuse his happiness of temperament, but I confess the cook was my admiration and my despair. Here was a man, no longer young, suffering from plague, in a ship in the most parlous condition; himself the possessor only of a chest of worn clothes, and a record of having spent all his wages in rum—indeed, his complexion bore evidence of his extravagance—and yet his pleasant greeting to me when I went below after we had cleared up our swept decks was as follows :

‘Didn’t I tell yer, Mr. Blackburne, ’ow that ’ere cargo-boat would get washed over? S’elp me, I knowed it would! My oath! ain’t they proper broke up in ’ell to-day! I ’ears my old pals say, “Missed Old Shushie by a hace!” You’ll see! I’ll euchre Old Nick this time!’

This breezy irreverent optimism concerning his fate in this and another world acted rather as a tonic, of which we all were in need, for, in truth, whichever way we looked at it, our case was sufficiently evil. And the loss of the Skipper, apart from my feelings towards his daughter, cut me to the heart. I had liked and respected him very much.

The vessel was not badly injured as far as we could see. She was still tight and dry, but we had no compass—for neither Hester nor I could find a spare one to replace that which had been smashed and swept overboard. This was inexplicable, for Captain Leigh always carried a spare compass or two as part of each vessel’s outfit. Then we had practically only

two sailor-men to work a heavily-sparred vessel of nearly two hundred tons.

But more trouble was yet to come.

On the evening of the second day after the loss of the Captain, I felt sick and feverish. I managed to stand my turns on deck, but by morning I could not raise my head from the pillow, and I had an accursed pain in my armpit.

To make a long story short, I had plague.

I lay in my bunk ill, horribly ill in body, but much more so in mind.

If ever a man wished to be out and about I did then.

I alone of those on board knew the navigation necessary to take the vessel home; and, above all, the responsibility of the poor fatherless girl lay heavy upon me.

I realised now that I loved her, and passionately wished to live, that I might win her.

I lay and listened to the creaking of the tossed ship—a separate groan in every tortured timber—and wondered how Johnston and the boy would manage; and how sickness dealt with the cook.

But more than anything else did my mind run on the thought how Hester was to live through the terrible position in which she was placed.

After learning the news of her father's death she had gone to her cabin for some hours, and remained alone with her sorrow.

When she came out she was very worn and pale, but in her face and eyes one read determination and courage to dare all things, and to be a comfort and

help to those of us whom pestilence and mischance had yet left alive.

She said very simply to me: 'Mr. Blackburne, you will now please consider me absolutely as one of the crew to do all I am able for our common good. I can at least cook and look after the sick.'

'Oh, Miss Leigh,' I said, 'we will manage somehow. Things will brighten after a little. Fine weather will allow us to cook, so we hope to spare you as many inconveniences as we can.'

'But I don't wish to be spared; I am strong and willing and well,' she replied bravely, 'so I mean to take my full share of duty. Believe me,' she added, 'work, after all, is the best consoler.'

She choked as she ended these words, and turned away to hide her tears.

From that hour she became the mainspring of our fortitude, for truly she possessed 'an equal mind in time of trouble.'

About noon of the day after that on which I took to my bunk she came to my room to speak to me of certain matters. Said she:

'I feel myself a bad doctor in worrying you. If you are too ill to answer, tell me.'

I felt myself in a condition in which I would have been glad to give anybody a shilling to shoot me, but I was anxious not to discourage the others by appearing very ill.

'Oh, no,' I answered, 'what is it?'

'It is this: Martin and I think it better to bring the cook aft here. Of course I know that we run more risk of infection. At least we make contact with a

fresh surrounding. Nevertheless it is so much more convenient that we wish to bring him here.

‘Neither the boy nor I are likely to get the disease, and Martin says he is too tough to get anything.’

‘Do you object? You see, it’s very difficult to look after two patients at opposite ends of the ship.’

I agreed. Alf and Martin came aft to the cabin at the same time.

This was the last clear recollection of current events which I had for many troubled days.

The time that followed is largely a blank to me—a time of evil dreams and great fears. But through all these poor strugglings for breath there ran a vague consciousness of one beatific presence, which I seemed to know, but could not name.

CHAPTER XI

WE LOSE OUR GREENWICH DATE, BUT FIND AN ISLAND

IT was on a day of bright sunshine and soft running swells that my senses came back to me, and I consciously knew my surroundings.

The ship seemed strangely silent. I heard no footfalls on deck, and, though I knew in a few minutes that a fresh breeze was blowing, yet the lazy motion of the vessel told me that she had no way upon her.

I strove to pierce the immediate past, blindly groping among the brain cells, where, I imagine, an imprint, a change of some sort, must take place every hour we live. If an impression is strong enough, each scene, each emotion, is bitten into them, even as the tool of the engraver bites the copper—and of these inward pictures is our past made up.

Such is memory.

Slowly and haltingly I sought for some outward landmark; and, presently, one came. As I looked out into the little homely saloon I saw a woman by the cabin table. A lonely figure sitting with her hand on her cheek, an open unread book before her, with sorrow and exhaustion writ large on her pale face.

I knew her in a moment. One thing truly had not altered—the wonder of her hair. Again I caught the glister of its burnished gold as the sunlight came and went through the cabin skylight.

She was fast asleep. I did not wake her, but pieced together the broken thread of our story. I remembered the pestilence; the great sea which swept our decks, and the loss of my captain. Then came my sickness, and all was chaos.

I knew that days must have passed, but of how many I had no idea.

No bell was struck, no cabin clock marked the hours. It seemed, indeed, as if a quiet sleep had crystallised the life of the ship.

The growing dimness of the cabin told me that the time was now afternoon—and, further, I felt hungry.

Shortly afterwards Hester, for of course I need hardly say it was she, awoke, and in a minute her hand was holding mine, and I heard a soft voice saying, 'Thank God!'

Several days elapsed before I heard an account of all the various troubles which befell my shipmates during the long interval in which I had hung between life and death.

'Have I been violent or troublesome?' I asked.

'No, not quite so bad as that—only wandering and talking constantly.'

'What about?' I asked, a little uncasily.

'Oh, about ships and sheep—and other things;' and, as Hester spoke, I caught the ghost of a smile in her eyes.

'Yes, Mr. Blackburne,' she continued, 'you have

been dreadfully ill. It was awful to sit here at night alone—for Martin and Alf have, on most nights, slept on deck—and hear the lapping of the water outside, and your mutterings, and the cook's groans. I often felt beside myself; but now I have my reward, and you are conscious again. Does the wound under your arm pain you?'

'Not a bit,' I replied.

'Well, that was what frightened me more than anything else. You had a huge, angry swelling in your armpit; and I didn't know whether to cut it or not. At last I felt sure I ought to do something, and I laid it open with a razor. Alf was consultant in the case. His view was that "the hailment, bein' inside you, tries to get out—upsets yer innards, d'ye see, Miss? 'Ere it's tryin' to bust through 'im. 'Elp 'im with the knife. Cut, Miss, cut 'earty.'"

'I don't know if I could have done it without the little imp's assistance. He is the kindest and most cheery little ruffian south of the Line.'

'Now tell me about the cook,' I said anxiously.

'The cook is fairly well,' she replied. 'He is up and about; but of course he's weak. He never seemed to me to be desperately ill. He was only a little delirious. I'm afraid he must have drunk a great deal in his time.'

'Why so?' I queried.

'Well, all his rambling appeared to me to refer to dealings with tap-rooms. He seemed perpetually to be disputing the reckoning with mine host.'

'Well, that's not an uncommon complaint.'

'Perhaps not, but the dispute in cook's case was one of great vigour and venom.'

“You swine!” “You dead-beat!” “Clear out!” from the one, and “Where’s my change?” “A long sleever, you swab!” “I ain’t knocked down my cheque yet, you dog!” from the other, made me thankful that he wasn’t as delirious as you have been.’

‘Now tell me about the others and of yourself.’

‘A people which has no history is a fortunate one. So with us three. We have remained perfectly well.’

Martin and the boy, whom I saw presently, looked fat and well, but Hester was worn and pale. Yet in spite of all her trials she was obviously in good health.

I wondered that she had not broken down under her great affliction. But, as she herself had said, ‘work had been her best consoler.’

I thought, too, of the shrewd Frenchman’s remark that ‘the labours of the body relieve the pains of the mind.’ This it is that constitutes the happiness of the poor.

‘I would like to talk to Martin, Miss Leigh,’ I said after a while.

‘Do you feel strong enough?’ she asked, doubtfully, and with an air of being in full charge of her patient that was infinitely comforting to me.

‘Yes, I think so,’ I meekly replied; ‘besides, I am anxious to know a number of things about the ship.’

‘Very well, I’ll bring him down, but I won’t have him exciting you.’

Hester went out of the cabin without turning her back, as she always did, paused for a moment, and,



SHORTLY AFTERWARDS HESTER, FOR OF COURSE I NEED HARDLY SAY
IT WAS SHE, AWOK.

holding one finger uplifted with a pleasant playfulness—

‘Now, remember,’ she said, ‘only five minutes and no more.’

She went on deck, and presently I heard the old sailor’s tread, and in a minute he stood before me.

‘Well, Martin,’ I said, after receiving his hearty congratulations on my recovery, ‘tell me all about the ship, and how you managed with only Miss Leigh and Alf to help you.’

‘Well, Mr. Blackburne, she didn’t need no lookin’ after. She pretty well done the job on her own. I just let her drift. We’ve had fine weather ever since you took bad.’

‘What should you say had been her drift, Johnstone?’

‘I reckon, sir, it would lie pretty well between north and west. But, as yer knows, I ’adn’t no compass, so I just guesses at it.’

The position of the ship, at the date at which my illness began, lay to the north of the track of ships bound Home round the Horn.

Still further north lay the region of the south-east trades, and within these limits a greater likelihood of help. Hence the north-westerly drift was to the advantage of the schooner. Moreover, Martin had really no choice but to let the wind blow her along. What between his single-handed condition, the direction of the winds which had prevailed, and the absence of a compass, I did not see that he could have done anything more than he had done.

‘Have you any idea of the distance covered?’ I next asked him.

‘Don’t ask me to put a figure to the miles we’ve gone, sir, but I reckons we’re well into the sou’-east trades; nigh the tropics, I should say.’

‘What makes you think that?’ I asked, anxious to hear what I knew could be only the half-instinctive reasoning of an observant seaman without scientific knowledge.

‘Well, sir, ’ere’s the wind been a-pourin’ steady from what seems to me the same quarter. The clouds, too, looks like a “trade” sky. And then the ’eat. See the thermometer—84° at this minute. And the flying fish. Take my word for it, Mr. Blackburne, we’re hinside the tropic all right.’

I had little doubt that the old man was correct, but I longed to be on deck and take an observation and be sure. I didn’t want to hit something harder than salt water without knowing it.

Just then Hester rejoined us, and I told her I was impatient to get sights.

‘By-the-by,’ I added, ‘who wound the chronometers?’

I immediately saw a look of deep distress come over Hester’s face.

‘Oh, Mr. Blackburne,’ she said, hastily, ‘what can I say to excuse myself, for I take the entire blame. I know I could not have done a more foolish thing. And some of the joy at your recovery has been chastened by the knowledge of how you must feel when I confess to you that I forgot the timekeepers utterly for several days after you collapsed.’

I daresay I looked pretty put out, and I fear she saw my chagrin.

‘Well, well,’ I said, ‘it’s a complication, but we’ll manage somehow. Never mind, Miss Leigh, you _____,’

‘No, no, Mr. Blackburne,’ she broke in, ‘I don’t want to be let off easily. The only thing I can say is, that when you became ill, we all, even Alf, were dreadfully despondent for a time. And, besides, we were up to our eyes in hard work. Anyway, I forgot the clocks, and I could kill myself because I have been guilty of the very kind of forgetfulness I pride myself on avoiding.’

This news was indeed a great blow to me. My mind ran with greater weight on visions of a dark night, a roar of breakers, and a crash on a low-lying reef. We seemed, indeed, to have drunk deep of the cup of maritime woe.

But it was well to look at the bright side of things. Surely the pestilence was at an end with us. Surely after all these days of close contact, the others, if susceptible, would, by this time, have been attacked. Moreover the moon and stars still silently pointed to the hours. Our fathers managed without chronometers. I could recover my Greenwich date when health came back to me. All would yet go well. We were not going to be permanently ‘bushed.’

I lay very weak for the next few days. The Trades were moderate, and Martin considered that the little ship made nothing steadily in her drift.

During these days, in the afternoon, when domestic duties, ‘household chores,’ were over for the time, Hester came to my room and brought light and healing in her fragrant presence. She was, indeed,

the best tonic I could have to help me to strength and usefulness.

One morning the news was brought to me which I had daily looked for. Alf Nash ran below to tell me that Martin saw land.

‘Tell Johnstone to come to me as soon as he can,’ I said.

‘Ay, ay, sir,’ said the boy, as he vanished on deck.

Presently Martin appeared. ‘What do you make of the land, Martin? Is it high or low-lying?’

‘It’s too far off, sir, to be sure. I thinks it low—reef-like—but I’ll report later on.’

‘Now, first, is the steering gear in working order?’

‘Yes, sir. I fixed it myself. You can depend on it.’

‘Good! Now, you must at once overhaul the ground-tackle, and get an anchor ready for letting go if required. Can you manage that job with what help the others can give you?’

‘I thinks so. Leastwise, I can easily manage the cable. As to the hanchor?—yes, sir, I’ll manage! A watch tackle and a few ’andspikes will do that job, too, I reckon.’

‘Very well, I hope so. My God, old chap, what would I not give to be up, and well, and at work.’

‘You cheer up, sir! I bets you’ll be about among hus strong an’ ’earty in a jiffy.’

‘Thanks!’ said I. ‘I hope so. Another thing, Martin—get the jib and stay-foresail ready for hoisting.’

‘I will, sir. I got the main-trysail all ready, sir, while you was ill; I’ve got it made up on the top of

the mainsail, which you'll mind got a good snug stow afore the gale broke on us.'

Prudent old fellow! He was therefore in a position to get the *Pandora* under manageable canvas in a very short time.

He returned on deck, and from the sounds which came aft to the cabin, I could imagine what strenuous exertions were going on forward to get our 'mud-hook' ready.

I daresay each of our bower anchors weighed over eight hundredweight without its stock. So it was a fairly heavy job for one man, a girl, and a boy.

We were fitted, too, with a cat and fish fall, as most sailing ships are, and not with the modern central crane. The *Pandora*, too, was well found in all kinds of gear. Of anchors we had four or five, varying, say, from eight and a half hundredweight down to one hundredweight or thereabout.

Well, to continue, the work forward was successful, and, all hands assisting, a bower anchor was got ready for letting go. This was the difficult matter, compared with which the preparations for getting her under working canvas were comparatively easy.

During the afternoon we approached the land sufficiently near to see that it rose very few feet above the level of the sea, and that it had a stunted, scanty vegetation growing upon it.

As the day wore on I got so fidgety and fretful below that I declared I must be taken on deck to see things for myself.

'But you will be made ill,' Hester remonstrated. 'You know you are not fit. I shall have spent my

labour in vain,' she added, with a rather reproachful look.

'I cannot help it, Hester!—I mean Miss Leigh,' I hastily corrected. 'I shall fret my temperature up to 212° if I remain out of sight of this reef. For goodness sake take me on deck!'

She called the boy, and said, 'Alf, Mr. Blackburne is going on deck; you will give me a hand. How do you think he looks?'

'Suttinly, Miss, I'll give ye both a'and. Ain't that kerrecter? 'Ow does Mr. Blackburne look? W'y, I sez tip-top. He ain't exactly fat, but he ain't a skelleton neither. You'll be fit for 'Omebush* in no time, sir. You ain't no bloomin' deserter from the churchyard. No, not by long chalks.'

I got out and tried to walk, but everything began to swim, and in a minute I telescoped into a bundle of limp limbs and sleeping clothes on the little seat between my bunk and the bulkhead.

'Mr. Blackburne, you must either let us carry you or I shall put you back in bed and lock the door,' said Miss Leigh, with an intonation which told me she would carry out her threat.

Between physical weakness and a desire to see things on deck I don't know what I said—I fear nothing very creditable to either my temper or my patience. Hester's answer was swift and decisive. I found myself being transported deckwards 'ladies'-cushion' fashion.

Remonstrance was useless, and, with a helping hand from Martin, who stood at the head of the companion,

* The Smithfield of New South Wales, where fat stock are sold.

I quickly found myself on the deck-house and securely fixed in a cane chair.

I said nothing, but I felt grateful. Perhaps I looked it. I felt a touch on my arm.

‘I hope I was not cross to you just now,’ said my nurse. ‘I didn’t mean to be unkind. I must think for you a little longer yet. In a week or so you shall think for—all of us,’ she added, after a tiny pause.

I pressed her hand as I replied : ‘Thanks, thanks! I owe you my life. You know, dear lady, that I am not myself—otherwise I would not be so unreasonable and querulous. A man doesn’t think quite straight when he is sick and ill—so please forgive me.’

‘Hush—no more!’ and she laid her hand for a second on my lips and vanished.

I looked around me. Heavens! how weak and tottery I was! But the blessed air and sunshine were like a benediction. Oh, the joy of leaving a sick bed! The physical happiness of breathing and walking without pain! I thought of Gray’s lines on a man recovering from sickness :—

The meanest floweret of the vale,
The simplest note that swells the gale ;
The common sun, the air, the skies
To him are opening Paradise.

And thus felt I, as I looked around, and once more drew the warm breath of the sea breeze, and drank in the brilliant azure of tropical ocean and cloudless sky. Dear God! the very waves seemed to laugh a welcome to me in sparkling overfalls!

But Martin presently brought my mind into more practical channels.

‘There’s the land, sir,’ said he ; ‘ye can see it from where ye’re sittin’.’

It lay dead to leeward of the vessel. I took a long look at it with the glasses. A low reef, with nothing to make us stop for. I called Johnstone.

‘Get some sail on her, Martin, and let us draw clear of that death-trap.’

The cheep of blocks and flap of canvas once more were heard. The pleasant murmur of divided waters again caught my ear, seeming to shape itself into words of hope, and to promise that brighter times were yet in store for our sorely tried company. An hour and a half of quiet sailing put the land away to wind’ard of us on our port beam. We had again hove to.

I knew only too well how weak I was, and I saw I could not yet be of any real use in working the ship ; so my object was simply to keep the vessel out of mischief till I was sufficiently strong to try to take her into safety. Moreover, my mind was now incessantly filled with the necessity of recovering the date, for no one on board had kept any record of time.

Indeed, the vagueness of my four shipmates was marvellous ; any period between a fortnight and six weeks was the time during which they supposed our drift to have lasted.

Two days passed away, with health coming back to me, and without external incident. We kept some small sail on the ship, and had the head sheets to windward all the time, gybing her round every two

hours, so that her nett drift, bar currents, was probably pretty well dead before the wind.

During this time another reef was seen, happily during the hours of daylight.

Among the preparations for future contingencies was the matter of getting our one boat swung out-board, or at least abreast of the broken rail.

We therefore got the davits shipped on the starboard side.

I shall not weary you with detailing how we did these things.

It sounds easy to say we shifted a boat from one part of the ship to another, but it took our weak company no small time to do it. Anyway, we did it—and that was the main point.

At length, early one morning, land was sighted for the third time, and as we drew closer in we saw that it was of larger extent, and though only a tropical atoll it evidently possessed a fair amount of soil, for we could distinguish the waving of the feathery tops of palms against the sky. And fervently I hoped that it might give us shelter and assistance—a short time would settle the question.

In my own mind I had ‘panned out’ the position as follows :

If we could fall in with help on the high seas, so much the better; but if we hadn’t that luck, what were we to do?

I felt still too weak to take any vigorous share in the sailing of the schooner. Indeed I had but one continuous wish—to be at anchor in some decent holding ground, and there lie quiet till food and

exercise made me able to think and work 'worth a cent.'

Again: the facts that I had neither day nor Greenwich Time; no compass; and only two men and a boy on board; all contributed to make me feel sure that the sooner I got off the high seas the better, before I blundered into some further mess.

Of course, I wanted an island with assistance of all kinds, but failing such a haven, I was prepared to go into shelter anywhere, and wait till physical and mental strength came back, sufficient to let me cope with the strange pass to which we had been brought by the pestilence.

CHAPTER XII

WE ANCHOR OFF THE ISLAND

AS we opened out the land, old Martin, who was aloft, reported that the reef enclosed a fairly large lagoon, within which was a small island. It was on this island that the trees grew, for the most part.

‘D’ye see any signs of people?’ I hailed, as he stood on the topgallant yard shading his eyes under the sharp of his hand.

‘None whatever, sir—no smoke, no vessels, no nothing, Mr. Blackburne!’

‘Stay where you are just now, Martin,’ I called back; ‘watch closely the colour of the water in every direction. And keep a sharp look out for an entrance. I wish to goodness the sun was astern of us going in here.’

‘Ay, ay, sir.’

Martin had been in a surveying vessel, and was quite at home in this kind of navigation.

By good luck the Trade-wind blew a moderate sailing breeze, and so, if happily an entrance in the reef were discovered, I felt we could negotiate its passage with greater ease.

But what of the lagoon inside? Was I to risk everything by sailing in with Martin conning her from aloft? Or, on the other hand, dare I commit the manœuvring of the ship to the inadequate charge of two invalids and a girl while I sent Martin and Alf Nash away to make a rough survey of the dangers to be avoided?

These thoughts were rapidly passing through my mind when Martin hailed the deck again.

‘I see an entrance, sir. It’s about three points on the starboard bow—you’ll hardly see it from the deck—it’s a bit round the corner.’

We were steadily rising the land, and in a short time the entrance was visible from the deck. It was situated apparently at the south-eastern end of the reef, and consequently we had a leading wind if we determined to attempt its passage.

After much inward questioning, I made up my mind to let the boat go away on a sounding expedition. Desperate diseases need desperate remedies, and I allowed myself no second thoughts. The whale-boat was swung out, and in her we put rations for two days, a lamp, and a hand-lead, with other necessary gear. She was quite big enough for two hands.

‘Now, Martin,’ said I; ‘listen to me closely! You are an old hand at this game! Be careful and look out for “Bumboras.”’*

‘I will, sir,’ replied the old shellback. ‘I once sees an officer and several men lost that way—anchored

* The local name used on the Australian coast for a place where the sea suddenly breaks heavily, due to a rocky outcrop at the bottom, over which the tide runs.

right atop of the place where the sea broke. Trust me ! I'll be careful.'

'All right. Now, when you get to the entrance see which way the tide is running, and if it's strong. Use the lead ; see what sort of channel there is, and the depth. In short, Martin, do your best to find if we dare take the *Pandora* through the passage. Once you are there, seek for an anchorage.'

'I'll do my best, sir.'

'All right ! I know you will. Work quickly ; you know the anxiety we shall be in till you are on board again. I'll run the schooner a little way to leeward, so that you won't have any pull to windward with that boat. You'll be tired enough by that time, I've no doubt, not to wish for any more pulling. If your report is good, and we decide to go in, a couple of short tacks will put us to wind'ard again, and we'll try our luck with the passage with a fair wind.'

The *Pandora* was now hove to ; Hester and the cook slacked off the falls, and Martin and Alf were soon pulling for the reef, leaving three very uneasy people in charge of the ship.

I am afraid I shall bore you if I give you an account of the anxieties of the next two hours, during which we could see nothing of the boat.

I had set my watch going on the strength of an altitude taken the day before at supposed noon by Hester, who could measure an angle very correctly.

The minutes as they passed seemed hours, and the hours themselves an eternity of disquietude.

Hester tried to make the time pass by various devices. We talked of books which we both loved,

and she repeated some verses from the 'Rubáiyát' of Omar Khayyám. I knew nothing of it beyond the bare name, which, indeed, I had believed to be that of a much advertised mineral water. I somehow mixed it up with Hunyadi-János. Such was my ignorance. I told Hester this, and the deck echoed to her delighted laughter—the first for many a day.

'You dreadful Philistine,' said she. 'I forgive you not knowing Omar's poetry. But you a sailor man and not know that he was a great astronomer and reformed the calendar. I blush for you!'

Our chief distraction, however, was the ship. We gybed her round every half-hour, and that manœuvre kept us occupied. But, try as we might, the two hours of waiting were among the worst I ever put in. At last we saw the boat coming round the point of a reef to the north of that by which we had entered. Evidently she had emerged by a second channel. We now let the schooner run off a few points, and were soon sufficiently far to leeward, where we waited for the coming of Martin and the boy, who got safely on board. We then hoisted up our boat, and a nice tough job that was, falls to the winch notwithstanding.

'Well, Martin, what have you to tell me?' I asked, as soon as the last turn was taken.

'First,' said the old sailor, 'the channel we've just comed out by ain't no good for a vessel, it's only a boat passage.'

'All right,' I said, perhaps a little impatiently; 'what about the other?'

'I was a-comin' to it, sir. I reckons it's well over two hundred feet wide, though I'll not give ye an

exact account o' the soundings, Mr. Blackburne. But it'll take a ship a sight bigger than this hooker, anyway. O' that I'm sartain.'

'That's good news. How's the tide?'

'Runnin' in, sir—but not makin' strong. I reckons we've plenty time to go in with the tail end o' this flood. Ye arst me about a hanchorage; well, I thinks we're all right; we'll 'ave to run up perhaps better nor 'alf a mile to the west o' the entrance. There's room there to bring up comfortable, and the depth is right enough—between seven and ten fathoms.'

Hester clapped her hands and turned to me, saying :

'Now, Mr. Blackburne, the island is going to be our Mascotte. You will see! We are going into that lagoon on the flood, and it is a tide which will lead us to fortune.'

I looked across at her brave smiling face and kind eyes, and I said to myself, 'Hang the island! You're our Mascotte!' Our eyes met for a moment. How I would have liked to have said some of the thoughts which choked me—but the cheery voice of Johnstone recalled me to duty.

'Shall I let the 'ead sheets draw, sir?'

'Do so,' I said, 'and we'll soon beat up. A couple of short boards will do it.'

The breeze was a sufficiently commanding one, and we were quickly heading for the opening, all of us filled with anxious thoughts, or, as my father used to say when we took him boat sailing in a hard breeze, 'with one's liver in one's mouth.' However, 'nothing venture, nothing have,' and I held my breath as we swept past the coral heads of the little passage.

When we rose on the great swell of the Pacific we seemed to look down on possible destruction, and our ears were filled with the thunder of many waters. A moment more, and our trial was over, we passed beyond these dangers into peace.

Starboarding the helm we headed up the lagoon, keeping pretty close to the shore of the islet.

‘Get the fore trysail and the stay foresail off her, Martin,’ was the next order. This was done, and he, the cook, and Alf went forward to stand by to let go our anchor when we came up in the wind.

The outer jib was now hauled down, and Hester, who had gone to the wheel after Martin had taken the schooner through, at a sign from me put the helm down, and when the ship had lost her way I gave the order to ‘Let go!’

A welcome plunge and rattle followed. At last we were at anchor! The depth gave us sufficient room to swing clear of both encircling reef and central islet; nevertheless, I was not, I confess, too happy about our holding ground, but one cannot have everything one wants in the world, no—not even mud.

Now I do not intend to weary you with all our doings in this place, but some of them I may speak of; certain other events came later during our stay on Pandora Island—as we soon began to call our refuge—and I shall tell you about them in due course.

The first consideration was naturally the safety of our vessel, and this we saw to, with infinite travail to ourselves, so far as in us lay.

Then for two of us strength to work was a boon which perhaps the island would give, so we wooed

Hygeia. We also planned further measures of disinfection, which, as I shall tell you, were faithfully carried out.

For all of us rest and a run ashore was an excellent prescription.

A week swiftly and not unpleasantly slipped away.

We explored the island; we caught fish—and Martin knew fairly well which were edible and which not, but we avoided rash experiments. To our disappointment we found no permanent well or spring, though there were several good water holes. We got a plentiful supply of cocoanuts, but no other eatable fruits.

In the evenings the two men played euchre, whilst the boy devoted himself to the study of the mouth-organ, an instrument capable, in his hands, of inflicting great torture, and quite new to me.

I do not think I ever shall forget those days. I hope not, anyway, for the memory of them is very dear to me. We used to have our supper on deck, or call it our evening meal—that is a generic term and means anything you like—at about six. Hester took a hand in its preparation, as the cook was too weak to do much as yet, and his acquirements didn't run to invalid cookery.

After the meal was over we would bring our chairs right aft, close to the rail, and there, while I smoked and hourly gained health, this gem among women, without art, and in the unconscious simplicity of her character, made deeper inroads on my affections, whilst I could only hope that I was not indifferent to her.

Sometimes she opened the stores of a mind richly furnished with solid knowledge of all kinds; sometimes she touched on the lighter paths of literature; and in either case I marvelled how in her three and twenty years she had garnered so great a mental harvest.

But what I liked best of all was when she sang, soft and low, some of those simple songs which are not the least happy part of the lyrical heritage of the English-speaking people.

Not once, but often, was the wish to risk my all on one momentous question almost overpowering. But I crushed it back, remembering just in time that 'the sped arrow and the spoken word come not back.' I had no right, I thought, to speak then. 'No,' said I to myself, 'I shall not spoil the happy, frank relationship which exists between us.' And so we drifted on, —perhaps half conscious that there must come a day when the curtain which I had drawn would be pulled aside, allowing me to find my future golden, or else to see it vanish into the outside night of lasting disappointment.

It was one of Hester Leigh's best charms that she possessed a keen sense of humour. You can well believe that an unconscious humourist like Alf Nash was a veritable treasure trove for exploitation. He was a new and strange type to be studied. I found him excellent value myself, though he did not possess for me the novelty he did for Hester, for I knew the Sydney larrikin pretty well.

Miss Leigh had a strong memory, and like the sundial, she remembered only sunny hours and things.

At least so it seemed to me in many of the darker days of this strange voyage, which she lightened by her stories and sayings.

During her probation in a London hospital she had been a close observer of the lights and shadows which surround the life of the 'submerged tenth,' whose world is Whitechapel and the Docks, and whose sins and sorrows bring them, sooner or later, to receive the secular absolution of hospital treatment.

We had, on one of these evenings, drifted over various subjects of converse, from graver things such as I have alluded to, down to the misuse and mispronunciation of words, when our attention was directed to a little bickering forward.

We could hear the rumble of the men's voices as they sat on the corner of the main hatch playing cards. Close beside them sprawled the boy, discoursing music of a kind out of his mouth-organ. A smoky lamp flung its uncertain radiance over the group, and even painted the mottled face of poor old Cookie with a counterfeit hue of wholesomeness.

'Wot kind o' a noise d'yer call that?' asked the cook all at once.

'Music, Doctor,' said the boy.

'Music! Seems to me yer must 'a' swallowed a mob o' kittens and they're a-fightin' oo's to be fust hont.'

'Cook, I'm sorry for yer,' retorted the imp. I could see the scamp hitch up his dropped lid as he spoke. 'Yus, yer've lost yer taste for a 'igh class hentertainment. Sp'iled it goin' to them shillin' "Saturday Pops" in the Town 'All. I'm rilly sorry for yer. 'Struth I am!'

‘Are yer?’ said the cook, ‘then take yer ’igh class noises for’ard. Yer kin serenade the blarsted moon if yer likes; she ain’t “walkin’ out” with no one, and will be glad of the hattendions of a torff like you. Be orf! Yer gives me the yaller ja’ndice to look at yer. I wouldn’t trust yer in a dairy. Yer’d curdle all the milk with that sour heye o’ yourn.’

The boy rose to go, but he evidently had a Parthian dart to launch at his opponent.

‘Well, mates, I’m orf. I’m only wastin’ my talents ’ere. Besides, I ain’t goin’ to be monopolised over by you, old grog-blossom! ’Ow much rum did it cost yer to buy that hexpensive complexion, Slushy?’

The aggravated cook made a movement to hit his tormentor, but the boy was out of reach in a moment.

‘Good-bye for the present, old Lush-up,’ said he. ‘My word, yer must ’a’ bin ’ard up for a drink last time you was in Sydney.’

‘’Ow’s that?’ asked the cook with interest, and quite taken off his guard.

‘W’y, I ’ears yer took to ’avin’ fits in the street, and gammons to choke, and when they opens yer shirt they finds a tally on yer: “Brandy revives me.” The fust few times yer gets a nobbler or two, but later on they “jugs” yer—“Obtainin’ drinks nder false pretences.”’

The deep voice of Martin now came into the wrangle.

‘Oh, dry up, both of yer. Cook, leave the bloomin’ young larrikin alone. Now, play yer card, old whiskey-tacket.’ And so the banter ended.

‘Did you hear that delightful malapropism?’ Miss Leigh asked.

‘Yes,’ I answered, ‘I did, but I can cap it easily. I once heard a leach of them flung at me in a single sentence. When the *Pandora* was lying at the loading berth in Darling Harbour, one of the wharf-labourers injured his ribs and drew sick pay from his Benefit Society.

‘Notwithstanding this he went out in the evening to amuse himself. He was seen by the argus eyes of an official of his lodge, who promptly pounced on him for breaking the rule which ordered him to stay at home when receiving sick pay.

‘The official thus stated the matter to me one day during a “Smoke-Oh.”

“Look ’ere, sir. Bill Johnson ain’t very sick’—e’s foxin’, I believe. ’E’s been a-gallawantin’ down Hoxford-street hafter height o’clock at night. Think o’ that, and ’im on sick pay! If ’e ’ad the doctor’s transgression to go hout—well an’ good. But if ’e were hout on ’is hown impossibility, w’y then by ’eavens we ’as a clue on him.”’

Half the pleasure of telling Hester a story lay in the joy of hearing her laugh. There are some people who, when they laugh, put your teeth on edge. I confess I occasionally hear sounds supposed to be due to mirth which simply create murder in my heart.

But Hester Leigh’s laugh was like the ripple of pleasant waters; it was a joy to listen to it.

‘Well,’ she answered, ‘your story reminds me of when I was doing duty in the out-patient department of the hospital. The Assistant Physician was a dapper little man; the day was hot, and he was irritable.

‘An over-dressed woman came in, wearing cheap jewellery; evidently a person too well off to come to a charity for treatment.

“‘What do you complain of?’ asked the doctor.”

“‘Oh,” said the woman with a mincing air, “I’m just full of diseases.”

“‘Indeed,” said the peppery doctor, “are you? Then just tell me one as a start.”

“‘Well,” replied the over-dressed one, “I’ve lately been suffering severely from *fatal* syncope.”

‘Tableau!—angry doctor—laughing students—demure nurses—exit the ornate lady!’

In quietness, and in such duties and simple amusements as I have sketched, the first week or so of our sojourn in the island sped away. In this remote spot I spent, indeed, many happy hours with Hester—a happiness, however, tinged with grief for the past, and uncertainty as to the future.

CHAPTER XIII

HOW I RECOVERED TIME AND PLACE

AFTER several days of this easy life, in which for me 'it seemed always afternoon,' I set myself seriously to consider the methods by which I could recover our lost reckoning, and so obtain the data to work out the ship's position.

Now, what was our exact plight? I was ignorant of the month and of the day. My chronometers had long run down. I had no compass, and I was totally ignorant of the latitude and longitude of the island.

Captain Leigh, in addition to the ordinary ship's equipment of nautical tables and almanacs, possessed a good sea library, an Encyclopædia, several books on mathematics, and a number of treatises on navigation, old and new, from Robertson to 'Wrinkles.'

He was about the best informed sailor I had ever met.

Of course, I knew pretty well I must be in south latitude, but as for longitude—well, I hardly thought we could have made so great a westing in our drift as to cross the one hundred and eightieth meridian. But, granting even this, my readers will agree with me that my information was certainly rather vague.

I was truly in a ' navigational fix ' not contemplated by the Board of Trade.

How I wished I had had a good mathematical education ; or that I was Lord Kelvin or Captain Lecky, or one of the men who write astronomical conundrums in the Nautical Magazine.

I have little doubt that a better navigator, or any well educated mathematician, would have solved my difficulties in other and more excellent ways than I did. I had simply to grope, and do the best I could.

With this acknowledgment of my navigational shortcomings, I will briefly sketch the means I took to find time and place.

Clearly the first thing to do was to recover the day of the month.

Now, there are several means by which this may be accomplished.

The simplest for me, who possessed that most perfect book of prophecy, the Nautical Almanac, was to find the declination of the sun or moon ; and to check the date so obtained, by the time indicated, from a measurement of the distance between the moon and the sun, or other star.

To my shore-going reader I may explain in a popular way that declination is the distance of a heavenly body north or south of the celestial equator. I should point out that it corresponds in a general way to terrestrial latitude, which is distance north or south of the terrestrial equator. Though this comparison may not satisfy all my readers, it gives a fair enough explanation of the term.

In the case of the sun, its declination is set down

in the Nautical Almanac for every day at noon at Greenwich. If, then, I could find the sun's declination at the island, I could also, by hunting in the Almanac, discover the declination nearest to that obtained locally in the island. The day on which the two amounts (degrees, minutes, and seconds of arc) most nearly corresponded would be the day of the month which I sought.

The same method could be employed in making use of the moon.

Having got the date, the time at Greenwich could be obtained by a 'lunar observation,' that is, by measuring the distance between the moon and either the sun or certain other stars or planets.

The distance of these bodies from each other is set down in the Nautical Almanac for every third hour at Greenwich. If then, on the island, I observed that the distance, say between the moon and sun, was such and such an amount, I could compare it with the nearest preceding distance in the Nautical Almanac. And, next, with a little proportion, I could get thereby the hour, minute, and second of Greenwich mean time.

To find the local time at the island was an easy matter from a suitable morning or evening observation of sun or star. The difference between the local time so found and the time at Greenwich obtained by lunar observation, converted into a measure of arc, would be the longitude of the island.

The latitude I easily found from observation of several stars. And with the help of the latitude so obtained—and the sun's zenith distance, also got by observation—I was able to find the declination of the

sun at noon at place, and thus begin by fixing the date.

As I have, at the end of my account of this voyage, set forth at considerable length the exact methods I adopted to find the above data, I think I may refer curious readers, if there be any, to that portion of the book for fuller details, and not burden the present pages with further technicalities.

Stated as above, the affair seems quickly and easily done. But, as a matter of fact, to do it practically, with anything like a reliable result, required no small amount of time, patience, and a good deal of careful calculation.

But this kind of work, always interesting to me, had a new attractiveness on Pandora Island. Very pleasant in the evening it was to watch the stars begin to show out of the azure vault as the daylight waned. It was at this hour that I got my best stellar observations. And Hester was so curiously keen on them that presently I told her that she would develop into a Caroline Herschell or an Agnes Clerke. Indeed she had already a pretty good knowledge of the principal constellations. 'Nothing,' she said to me, 'gives me so visible a token of absence from England as the unfamiliar look of the heavens on a glorious night like this.'

'I can well understand the feeling,' I answered, 'although I have been so often out to the south'ard that the sky looks as familiar to me here as in the old world.'

'"The stars change ; the mind remains the same,"' she half whispered to herself.

‘Fortunately,’ I quickly said, ‘otherwise Europe would not now be having the excellent object lesson which the colonies are giving the world of their affection for their mother country.’

‘Ah,’ she replied, ‘you heard the old-world saying I quoted just now. Listen to the pleasant modern lines in which a much loved Australian* has redressed it :

‘Here from the Parent Land divided far,
For us, her children, shines no better star—
Changed are the skies, not so the British name,
Or mind or heart, which still remain the same.’

‘How do you like his verse?’ she asked.

‘Charming and true,’ I replied.

‘And made on the spur of the moment,’ she added. ‘How pleasant to be able to do things both quickly and well. Yes,’ she continued, looking up at the sky, ‘these sparklers are still very strange to me. I sadly miss the Bear overhead and the faithful Pole-star. Here, the Cross does not give you the points of the compass in the same easy way.’

‘Yes,’ I replied, ‘I must say I wish we had a bright Southern Pole-star. But you ought to go down to the “Forties and Fifties” on a clear frosty night to realise the full glory of these heavens.’

Close to the Cross there is a curious patch of dark sky, apparently untenanted with stars. It shows up so blackly against the rest of the sparkling firmament that it has aptly been called the ‘Coal Sack.’

Miss Leigh’s sharp eyes picked it out at once.

* Sir Alfred Stephen.

‘Oh, there is the “Coal Sack,”’ she exclaimed.
‘And after all, it is not unpeopled.’

‘Thanks to photography,’ I added.

‘Do you know those lines,’ asked Miss Leigh, ‘by the Duke of Argyll where the photography of stars is referred to in words which are as correct as they are beautiful?’

‘No, I don’t. Will you repeat them?’

‘Well, the poet is talking of ethereal impulses passing from souls on earth to souls in heaven, and he compares them to the rays of light from invisible constellations reaching us here :

‘As rays unseen, abysmal light,
Are caught by films of silver salt
When these are set to watch by night
The wheelings of the starry vault.’

‘I do not know,’ she continued, ‘of any instance where a discovery of recent science is so correctly and so finely enshrined in poetic thought.’

I love to recall the memory of those Island nights in which the arch of the sky sparkled as with diamonds, and the waters of the Pacific ran in streaks of silver. The prosaic observations of moon or star took on a new charm when my assistant and companion was this brave and sweet-faced woman whose presence and counsel had been an inspiration to fortitude, and whose smiles I counted no mean reward for any toil or danger.

To cut short the account of my astronomical difficulties, which I see threatens to become tiresome, I may say that the nett result of my observations was as follows:—I made the date to be June 5th, 1900.

The island was situated in lat. $20^{\circ} 40'$ S., and in long. $164^{\circ} 28\frac{1}{2}'$ W.

As a matter of fact, the Greenwich time to which I set my chronometers was very nearly correct, for my longitude deduced therefrom was, as I afterwards found out, less than ten miles in error.

Our haven of rest, therefore, lay in a not unfrequented part of the ocean, but, to my surprise, was apparently uncharted.

Raratonga, one of the best known islands of the Cook Group, lay a little to the south of east, only about two hundred and forty miles distant; while Apia, in Samoa, our destined port, lay north-east, about six hundred miles.

CHAPTER XIV

WE FIND A COMPASS AND PREPARE TO SAIL

NOW that we had, as I believed, fixed the position of Pandora Island fairly correctly, and had the chronometers once more at work, our next trouble was to make shift for a compass. 'This infernal question of magnetism' is one which only a few favoured mariners seem to grasp satisfactorily, and I am not one of these. It was, therefore, in rather a disconsolate spirit that I set about finding out how to make a compass.

I ransacked the bookcase of the *Pandora*, and read more of the theoretical aspect of magnetism than I had ever done before. But when it came to actually making a serviceable compass, which would work reasonably in a seaway and not chase its own tail, I found little or nothing to guide me.

Our talk, therefore, was of nothing but the magnetisation of needles, and of how to make a cap and pin on which to swing the compass card.

Where was I to find a suitable bowl? Would wood or porcelain do? Would it be better to try to make a spirit compass instead of one of the ordinary type?

With the less friction of a partially supported card, the cap and pin difficulty might be more easily overcome.

These were the practical questions which agitated my mind—questions in which all the others took the liveliest interest. Whether our various contrivings in the matter would have been crowned with success, I am not sure: if so, it would have been through the ingenuity of the cook, who really was a very good mechanic. However, our plans and strivings were unnecessary in the end, for a fortunate, a really fortunate, discovery took place, which very probably saved us much disappointment—and perhaps ultimate failure; for I am thoroughly satisfied it is not an easy matter for unskilled people to make a reliable compass.

But let me tell you about our lucky find.

We had decided to carry out an elaborate disinfection of the ship, and to that end a good deal of our small cargo and stores had been got on deck to air, and to facilitate the fumigation of the hold.

Hester had been looking over various business papers connected with the ship when she came on an invoice for two spirit compasses.

‘Look at this, Mr. Blackburne,’ she exclaimed, ‘surely these must be on board! My father had no other vessel in Sydney when we left. They could only have been intended to be taken with us.’

I looked at the paper and replied, ‘Yes, they must be stowed away somewhere. These compasses are for use in boats—probably for inter-island cargo boats—craft like the one we lost.’

‘I suppose,’ remarked Hester, ‘that we had better begin a methodical search into everything.’

‘It may come to that,’ I said. ‘But I think we can narrow the field somewhat. Have you got the manifest and the list of stores?’

Thereupon Hester wished to know what a manifest was, and when I explained that it was the name given to a list of the cargo, she at once said that she knew where it was to be found.

We then went through the items, and of course in almost every instance the contents of each case or barrel was specified. In a few, such expressions as ‘sundries,’ ‘small stores,’ and the like, made it possible that the compasses might be contained in them. It took a day or two to hunt through these various packages, but at last our perseverance was rewarded, and we possessed two good spirit compasses.

Our handy man, the cook, fitted up a respectable-looking binnacle; and as he gained in strength he tackled the larger job of mending the broken rail.

‘Didn’t I tell you,’ said Hester, with triumph in her voice and eye, ‘that the island would prove to be our Mascotte?’

‘Call not a man happy till he is dead, nor us fortunate till we’re home,’ I replied with a smile.

‘God’s sun’s in the heavens and all’s well. If your face didn’t belie your words I’d brand you as a croaker,’ replied Hester.

‘I believe I am one. My mother used to say that all her children must be Scotch, because they “joked wi’ deeficulty.” She declared that she suffered from their gravity, and that when she was merry her offspring merely looked at her in a shocked reproving

sort of way which killed at once all her Irish gaiety of heart.'

'Well, sir,' she rejoined with playful archness (I think that is how story writers would express her bewitching brightness of manner), 'it is not too late to begin better things. Some scattered fragments of youth yet remain to you! But remember

'The Bird of Time has but a little way
To flutter—and the Bird is on the wing!'

I said to myself, if this monitress will only be always by me to preach the gospel of cheerfulness, then I shall find it easy to be merry. But if not, what then? It was best for me to think of something else. At least our ship was a cause for congratulation. Not only was she in excellent order, but her crew had regained their health and strength, and we began to look forward to an early day to get out of the lagoon, which had so far proved itself a kindly haven. The voyage to Apia of six hundred miles was likely to be an uneventful one, our port lying in the direct line of the South-East Trades, so we hoped to have a fair wind all the way.

During these many days the constant association on the ship and Island, and the strange dependence on each other which the hard usage of the sea and the evils of illness had brought to pass, drew Hester and me together in a way that months of ordinary conventional shore-going life would never have done.

The obligation to protect her, to work for her safety, and pity for her orphaned state, on my side; on her part, remembrance of the long days of weakness and wandering when I came near to dying,

through which her goodness and nursing knowledge had brought me back to life—these passages, I say, made links between us which I had begun to hope might yet ripen into love itself.

But I was all unlearned in such matters, and knew nothing of the 'ensigns of affection.'

For myself, I felt that my peace of mind was quite gone; and that, if I missed gaining Hester's love, I had surely missed the greatest thing in the world for me, and without it I would go sadly all the days of my life.

So thought I then. So think I yet. Nor do I forget that time, which happily wipes most tears away, softens love-losses also. But, nevertheless, I knew if this, my great venture of the heart, came not back, the sky would be less blue and the sun less glorious to my eyes for all the after time.

Even had I known that Hester loved me, I would not now have asked her to marry me, because I felt that it would not be quite fair to ask her when she was, so to speak, dependent on my skill to bring her back to Australia.

Then she was so alone, so pathetically isolated, and without that correct judgment in affairs of the heart which naturally comes from being surrounded by the diverse interests of the land, and by the companionship of men and women of her own way of life and education. Over and above all this, she was comparatively a rich girl and I a penniless sailor!

I have always considered that shipboard engagements are the better for the mellowing and sifting effects of a subsequent acquaintance on shore.

Idleness, the freedom of life on board, and not infrequently the absence of solid intellectual qualities and attainments upon which, in times of inaction, to chew a kind of mental cud, are the factors which cause a shipboard engagement, rather than real affection or suitability of character.

On all grounds, therefore, I thought it only right to say nothing of my feelings towards her until I had landed her safe in Sydney.

I imagined I concealed my mind fairly well; yet I know now that this dear woman read me like an open book. Besides, what had I not babbled of her, and to her, during my illness?

Although the really important preparations for renewing the voyage were completed, we found that there were a good many odd jobs still to be done which postponed the date of our sailing. I was not sorry for the delay. Neither the cook nor I, though both now in good health, felt able for the arduous work which would fall upon us with so meagre a crew whenever we left the protecting arms of the reef.

Being stronger, I was able to get about the island and the reef in a way I could not do at first. It was not of any great extent. The little plan I drew will give you an idea of its size. It was rather a commonplace island. Certainly, it did not possess all the interesting features of the Coral Island of our youth. There were no inhabitants. I question if anyone had ever landed on it. At any rate, there were no signs of a lasting occupancy by either brown men or white.

I think I told you that we had discovered early that it had no permanent water supply, though one would not have died of thirst by any means, as there were several large collections of rain water, both on the reef (where they were brackish from spray) and on the central islet.

Pandanus and coco trees grew fairly profusely, and, likewise, a rough, coarse grass. At one or two places the foreshore sloped to the water in a kind of low beach; in one place in particular, where there was a small cove-like indentation in its contour, nearly opposite our anchorage.

The reef was irregular in height and width. Opposite to the *Pandora* it rose to quite a respectable altitude, and had a good, broad back, while at other places it had very little elevation above the sea, and I could readily believe that in heavy weather a good deal of broken water would roll over the coral rampart into the shut-in expanse of lagoon.

This reef was an immense source of interest to all of us—except Martin, who said that he had spent five years of his life about the Great Barrier, and ‘anybody could have his whack of coral.’ Hester found endless amusement in rambles over it.

We sometimes took the boy with us to look after the boat. He was very anxious to bathe, a thing I would not let him do for fear of sharks. On one occasion he landed with us, and loaded himself with lumps of coral and so forth. Then, whilst trying to jump on to the whaleboat, he fell into the lagoon with a loud yell. He could swim well enough, but the load he had about him made me anxious for a moment.

However, his head and drooped eye ('the one with the dead light on,' as Johnston used to say) suddenly shot up.

'My word! ain't that a shave? I reckoned I was drowned!' he exclaimed.

'No fear of that,' said Miss Leigh, dryly, 'your levity will always keep you up.'

But the sarcasm was quite lost on Alf, who thought she had referred to his left eye, and he cheerfully rejoined:

'It ain't no hodds, Miss. My eye bein' "cronk" don't make no difference to me swimmin'!'

We heard him afterwards recounting his adventures to the cook, whom he assured that he had remained fully five minutes under water.

'Well, Alf,' said the cook, 'I can 'ardly believe it. Lord, boy, the likes o' you couldn't stay that long underneath the water quiet-like without comin' up to *blow*!'

The cook had a lively wit as well as Alf, and knew that the latter was given to amplifying his deeds.

Hester and I had come to like our three companions very much.

Of Johnston I have already spoken. He evidently looked on himself as her natural protector; and it was sometimes comical—and once or twice embarrassing—the way in which he showed his sense of guardianship. Hester had a warm liking for the sturdy and faithful seaman. The cook, also, though he may have wasted most of his life, was, nevertheless, a kindly, honest, and plucky fellow. The boy I have already said a

good deal about. He had capital stuff in him. And, as Hester often said, his consideration, his kindness, and his helpfulness to her, especially during the dark days following her father's death and my illness, were things she could never forget. He was a larrikin, of course, but a right good-hearted one.

During these times in which we wandered together about the island or sat on deck at night, I sometimes wondered at her silence regarding her father's death. I myself kept as clear of the subject as possible.

However, one evening the conversation drifted on some of the graver things of life—of belief, of bereavement, and so forth.

I was sorry our talk had taken this direction. My companion's face was turned a little from me, and I now knew her varying expressions so well that the tightened lip and the tense nostril told me that her terrible loss was very present in her mind.

'Let us talk of other things, Miss Leigh,' I remarked tentatively.

'No, Mr. Blackburne, I am thankful to talk to you to-night of my poor father. I could not unveil my misery to strange eyes or ears, but you have been brought very near to me in these weeks. I preach to you the gospel of cheeriness; and I do so partly for the same reason that children sing to themselves in the dark—it reacts on my own heart-sadness. But the pain—the pain—of my loss—of what has happened—is with me all the time.'

She paused, and we both sat silent. How my sympathy went out to her in her loneliness! What self-control! What fortitude had she not shown? What an example to weaker spirits!

Presently she turned round and we talked of her father. A little later Martin struck two bells (nine o'clock), and Hester began to gather up her belongings.

'It has been a relief to me to speak to you, Mr. Blackburne. Up to now I have repressed myself, for I did not like to say to you what sometimes choked me when I am alone. But you have been so truly good to me that to-night my talking to you of my poor father gives me a kind of unhappy happiness. I thank you!—I thank you! Good night!'

She rose to go below, and held out her hand.

I took it, and held it for a moment.

'God bless you! Hester—and keep you! And I thank you for all you did for me,' I said in a whisper.

I felt the warm pressure of her hand while I heard her answer in a low voice—

'And may He bless you, too, Dick!'

And in a moment she was gone.

CHAPTER XV

A GALE OF WIND, AND WHAT CAME OF IT

A DAY or two before we reckoned to start we had been hard at work all the morning.

My abscess had now soundly healed, and I could use my arm pretty well—exercising, of course, a cautious boldness.

I had gone below about half-past nine to get a drink of water out of the filter, when I happened to look at the mercurial barometer.

Now, in these latitudes, I would have expected the mercury to stand rather high at that hour in the forenoon. There is a regular diurnal ebb and flow, and ten a.m. is not far off the normal time of the mercurial high tide.

Instead of this being the case I found that the glass had fallen considerably, and that the quicksilver was cupped.*

I felt uneasy, and took a careful note of the reading; it was 29·85, a height which the aneroid closely confirmed.

* Concave on its surface.

I now returned on deck to talk to Martin and to observe the look of the weather. On my way to the bowsprit, where he was at work, I met Hester Leigh.

‘Mr. Tell-tale-Face,’ said she, ‘what has put you out? I am sure something has. What is it?’

‘The barometer is not behaving itself; it has developed irregular habits,’ I replied.

She pressed for an explanation, and according to my lights I gave it to her.

‘Why,’ answered Hester, ‘you complain of it being too low this morning; but last night, and even this morning early, I happened to look at the mercurial barometer and I particularly noted that it stood over thirty inches; and I thought to myself “what a fine day we must be going to have!”’

This information of further irregularity did not help to reassure me, for any divergence in these parallels from the usual behaviour of the mercury is a symptom which ought to put the weather doctor on the alert.

I noticed that a haze had crept up all round, and that our horizon had become contracted. A light north-easterly air still wrinkled the surface of the lagoon; but the surf outside seemed unusually heavy; its everlasting thunder and white glory, as it broke, seemed menacing this morning. It was always wonderful to behold. To-day it seemed both wonderful and terrible. The aspect of the heavens was sullen and lowering.

I was not reassured by my survey of sea and sky. Their indications were quite in keeping with those of the silent finger of the mercurial column.

I could not, however, easily bring myself to believe that anything worthy of the name of cyclone was about to burst upon us.

I took this view, if for no other reason than that such storms are not very common; but, more especially, because it was not now the season for hurricanes in that part of the ocean where, according to my observations, we must be lying.

Still, game is sometimes killed in the close season; and it was possible that a stray hurricane might find itself wandering round in June or July. I, therefore, thought it wise to do everything in order to make the schooner snug.

We did not attempt to send down yards or masts, but we saw to it that the gaskets were not likely to get adrift, and that everything was made secure on deck as well as aloft. We got the other bower anchor over the rail, with plenty of chain ranged ready for letting go. To the shore we carried out a strong steel wire hawser, and made it fast to the stems of two stout trees which grew chock-a-block with each other.

We could slip this line at once, if necessary, and let her swing out towards the reef, or, if we wished, we could even hang on to it, and ride stern to shore, if by any chance it seemed to our advantage to do so. At any rate it was there—it might be useful—it did no harm.

On the starboard chain, to which we rode, I got a luff to ease the strain should a sea come into the lagoon, and we rode heavily.

‘Would you like the boat ’oisted hin, sir?’ asked Johnston.

‘I think so,’ I made answer. ‘If we go on either the reef or the island the boat won’t be of much use to us in getting ashore. And if we leave her in the water, and things get really bad, she’ll run a good chance of swamping or getting stove. Yes, Martin, by all means hoist her. We’ll get her inboard and lash her alongside the rail.’

The gloomy day drew towards afternoon. The air was sultry and the sky obscured. The few land birds of the island had sought shelter and repose in the wooded portions of their domain. Screaming ocean fowl flew about, filling the air with their hoarse calls, evidently apprehensive of some atmospheric change. All nature seemed expectant.

The barometer had fallen still further—by five p.m. a tenth—and heavy puffs of wind were beginning to pipe through our naked spars, and to make a sad music in the coco groves ashore. These gusts of wind did not seem to be steady from one quarter, but ranged anywhere from N.E. to S.E. I felt distinctly uneasy, as you may well believe.

By eight o’clock in the evening it was blowing a whole gale of wind from the east, with violent squalls of rain. It was very dark, except when the moon shone out between flying legions of tattered clouds. I sent the boy to light the binnacle, and told him to keep handy for a call. By the compass I noted carefully the direction of the wind.

We braced the yards sharp up, and gave the schooner as much chain as possible, always keeping in mind that she would probably be swinging in more directions than one.

If my readers will glance at the plan of Pandora Island, they will find a circle within the lagoon with the varying directions taken by the wind during the passage of the storm. A glance at it will explain the following account of the troubles which overtook our vessel.

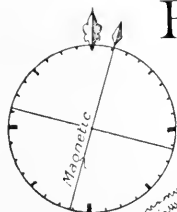
I told you just now, that among other preparations for the gale I had carried a hawser ashore, and made it fast to some trees. With the wind at east, you will see that if we held on to it, we should be forced to expose our broadside to the pressure of the storm.

We therefore slacked it right away early in the evening, so as to allow us to ride head on to the wind.

We did not let go of it altogether, for, in the event of this being a true circular storm, it crossed my mind, as I said before, that we might yet find it of some service. For, by holding on to it, the little indentation in the island, opposite which we were anchored, might be used as a shelter. One always in every emergency of life regrets the omission of some precaution, and I then felt sorry that I had not let go a second anchor earlier in the day. It is, no doubt, often said that one anchor with a long range of cable is better than two with less; but, nevertheless, it is not pleasant to go ashore and be asked why you had still another anchor at the bows not yet let go.

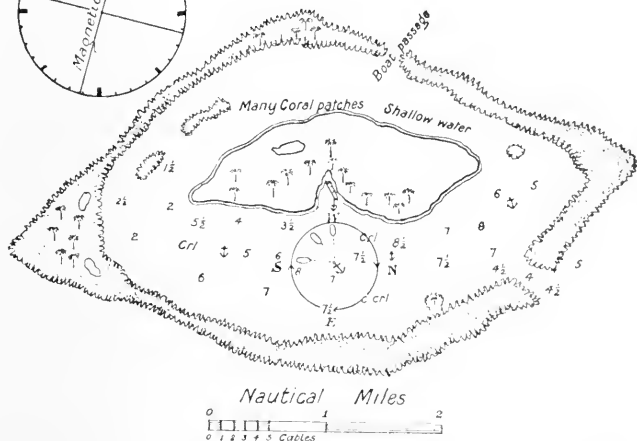
During the next six hours the ground tackle held bravely, although in addition to the weight of the wind a nasty little sea found its way into the lagoon, and the *Pandora* strained heavily.

I wondered, indeed, how one anchor held as it did in that poor holding ground; and I suspected that a



PANDORA ISLAND.

LAT. $20^{\circ}40'S$. LONG. $164^{\circ}20'W$.



The circle within the reef indicates the changes in the direction of the wind during the gale which cast the schooner ashore.

fluke must have got hooked under an overhanging ledge of coral. If we ever came to sail, I speculated on the probability of our succeeding in weighing with the small power we possessed.

As the night wore on, I observed that the wind drew into the south-east and south, with the result, as you will see on referring to the chart, that we swung directly towards the island, which was absolutely invisible.

I was inclined to think, from the way in which the wind altered in direction, that this was a cyclonic gale; and, further, I took a somewhat favourable view of our position in it, because the barometer had fallen no more since eleven o'clock, when the mercury stood at 28.70, its lowest reading. Moreover, the wind, with the exception of an occasional squall, blew with no increase of violence.

I suspected that we were quite out of the dangerous area, and I reckoned that the centre of the gale lay nor'-nor'-west or thereabouts.

I also took it that the storm must be recurving, yet it seemed unlikely that it should be doing so at a latitude so near the Equator as I put our island.

Still things were quite bad enough in all conscience. Holding ground anything but reliable; darkness, and all its added dangers, encompassing us; a reef on one side, and an islet on the other.

What if we started dragging? Two of us kept forward anxiously watching the cable, and ready to let go the other anchor in case of the starboard chain parting. During the flying gleams of moonlight I tried to get bearings, but without success, all the time

anxiously watching the direction of the wind, while, like the apostle of old, I wished for the day.

In this fashion passed the slow hours of night, of storm and darkness.

Between two and three o'clock someone touched me as I crouched close to the binnacle. It was not easy to make out who it was; I thought it was the boy. But I soon knew it was Hester.

'Come below for a minute. I've lit my Primus stove, and have made a huge jug of hot cocoa, and, as I'm sure you're hungry, I've got cold beef and other things. Come along!'

'Thanks, so much!' I shouted, 'I but won't leave the deck yet. Let the others go down first, and I'll see how it looks in a few minutes. Stay here a moment till I fetch them from forward.'

'Please let me go with you,' she entreated.

I took her hand and we groped our way in the darkness. Once or twice a gust fairly took charge, and we had to crouch down and hold on to one another. Miss Leigh had on a tanned leather coat, but no hat, and, consequently, the first staggering, blinding gust broke out, and blew in a mane her masses of wonderful hair till she must have looked like the embodied spirit of the storm. It came across my eyes and round my face till it seemed as if billows of gold encompassed me about. Not even could that howling gale rob this living Vallombrosa of its fragrance.

I found Martin and the cook sitting or lying on deck. They had made some sort of shelter for themselves, and were watching the cable. The boy was

asleep. Even the mad hooting of the wind in the rigging and the uneasy motion of the vessel could not keep this waif from forgetting his wild surroundings. Much 'park-dossing' had 'blooded him to the open,' and he slept like a tired drover. The two men were trying to smoke, and were obviously very alert.

Hester went up to the old man and put her lips close to his ear.

'I have made food for all hands and a hot drink—cocoa. Go down at once all three of you and eat. I shall stay here with Mr. Blackburne till you return.'

'Thank ye, Miss,' I could hear him say, as he shook his head and pointed to the cable. But Hester motioned him to go. And presently all three went aft, leaving Miss Leigh and me to watch the ship.

Conversation was out of the question, so we silently awaited the return of the sailors. The rain had taken off for the time, and the men had got a couple of gratings to huddle together upon, which kept us off the wet deck. One could realise the vast force of the wind more startlingly here than aft. The sea striking against the bows, the jump of the vessel, and the surge and grind of the chain in the hawse-hole—all added to the wildness of the situation. The vessel was a plaything in the grasp of a giant; and we two weak mortals felt our nothingness in the presence of the vast powers of nature let loose around us. Involuntarily, in the wild shriekings of the wind, I felt my companion lean closer to me till her head lay against mine. Once she tried to speak, but her voice was lost in the hoot and moan drawn out of tense wire and strained timbers.

The men soon returned. They looked the better for their refreshment.

The cook bent down with elephantine courtesy, and bellowed his thanks. I could only catch the termination of his remarks.

‘The ’ot drink, Miss, was tip-top! Nothin’ like summat wet and warm of a night like this. We’re all much obliged. Reg’lar jumped my claim to-night, Miss—you did!’

Once more we went along the decks together; this time we were shot forcibly by the wind, and I wished we had been tethered to a log to keep us from going over the taffrail altogether. We dropped down the companion and drew the scuttle.

What a contrast! It was noisy enough, no doubt, but coming from that bedlam of wild sounds on deck the cabin was as quiet as the crypt of St. Paul’s after the roar of central London!

‘Now begin to eat, Mr. Blackburne,’ said Hester, ‘and I’ll pour out your cocoa. I think it’s hot enough. Try it. Is it right?’

‘Yes, excellent,’ I replied, ‘but you must have something as well. Let me cut you some cold beef.’

‘Don’t waste your time, Mr. Blackburne. We are not at a ball politely boring each other. I command you to eat!’

‘Very well,’ I said, ‘I shall stoke myself swiftly, but do thou likewise—else digestion will not attend on appetite with me.’ And we both began to eat.

How comforting one found the cocoa! How one enjoyed the simple, wholesome sea fare!

‘How much better this is than most of the tasteless

tinned rubbish which we persuade ourselves is fresh meat,' I said to Hester.

'Oh, don't imagine,' she replied, 'that it is only at sea that the worship of tinned trash obtains. I assure you that even in New South Wales, with mutton and beef within the reach of everyone, many women of the working classes are too lazy or too incompetent to cook a decent meal for their families, but waste their wages on what the Americans call "canned goods."'

'I haven't a brief for "canned goods," but some of them are good, surely,' I said.

'Of course they are—the majority, probably, and especially the fruits. But it makes me inclined to shake a lazy, untidy woman, with no buttons on her frock and pins everywhere else—like a *chevaux-de-frise*—who gives her children tinned herrings or canned salmon because she is too indolent to make a wholesome meat and vegetable soup. But, good gracious! I forgot to give the men a glass of grog!' she suddenly exclaimed.

It was curious to hear this girl in so strange a surrounding, indifferent and forgetful of the perils of the night, plunge into so alien a topic as domestic economy. She once, you may remember, told us she had no views. She was not quite correct, for on the question of being a good housekeeper they were very decided. However, the shortcomings of bad housekeepers, and the omission to serve out rum, were alike forgotten in the next minute.

At that moment—it was close on three o'clock—an unusually heavy blast struck the schooner. I heard,

even in the cabin, a report, accompanied by a heavy jerk. The vessel trembled throughout.

I realised at once that our chain had parted and I sprung up the companion, and in an instant was rushing along for'ard, where I found that Martin had already let go the other anchor, and was giving her chain.

Would it bring her up? It was no good talking about cutting away the masts. To say the truth, I preferred to chance the alternative of crashing into the islet to facing a future with our wings clipped.

However, the question whether we drove ashore or not was one which would be very quickly settled. By the time we had payed out all the cable we dared, we were not more than a hundred feet or so from the shore.

I could even hear at times the crash of falling trees.

Unfortunately, luck was still against us, and from the sudden bringing up, followed by brief moments of easy movement, I knew that the anchor was dragging and catching on broken ground.

All at once the shadow of night and tempest seemed to take a deeper hue, and I knew in a moment that we were within the little indentation on the foreshore of the island, and that we would strike immediately.

Hester Leigh was standing by me at the after end of the deck-house. It was certainly a moment of great suspense and excitement. I flung open the companion, and, hardly knowing what words I used, I exclaimed:

‘We are going to strike! Get below at once! The

spars may come down! And—Oh! my dear heart!—remember I love you—now and for all time!’

The words were scarcely cold on my lips when a heavy crash took place.

The little vessel lay heavily over to port. I thought she was about to turn right over. I fell heavily against the side of the companion, missed my hold, and along with Hester was precipitated to the bottom, and for the moment I remembered no more.

When I came to I found myself lying on one of the settees with a handkerchief tied round my head. The cabin lamp still burned, but plate, glasses, and food were lying in one common ruin in every direction. At my side sat my dear one.

‘Are you hurt? What has happened?’ were my first words.

‘I am absolutely unhurt,’ Hester replied. ‘When the schooner took the ground she heeled heavily over and flung us down the companion; that you must remember. On your way you struck your head and you were almost senseless for a short time.’

The *Pandora* lay over at a great angle, but had now fallen to starboard. And although I heard some grinding and movement in her, she was infinitely quieter than I should have thought possible under the circumstances. I wondered how it had fared with the others. I tried to get up, but my head at once began to swim, and I felt deadly faint.

I crawled towards the companion-way, but even this mode of progression I could not yet accomplish by myself.

In an instant I felt a firm arm around me, and I

got back upon the couch. I felt choked with a voiceless misery, in that, for the time, I could not be on deck and see how things went.

But I lay quiet, and soon felt better. Then I turned to Hester and began to say something about my ill luck. I forget utterly what I did say—probably something bitter and impatient.

I cannot now tell what swift, what speaking expression, may have passed over both our faces and shone from our eyes—which are truly the windows of the soul. But all at once I felt two dear arms around my neck and a wet fresh face pressed to mine.

I know not what I said ; what she replied
Lives, like eternal sunshine, in my heart.

There are inward holy places in everyone's life, which it is sacrilege to tell of carelessly or publicly ; and of such sacred things was that radiant gate through which Hester Leigh and I then passed.

Our wrecked plight, the appalling heel of the ship, and the roaring of the wind and sea, all melted for the moment into the infinitely distant, and the living present became ourselves only.

Two beings and one soul,
Two hearts so madly beating,
To mingle and be whole.

Thus, in this stormy setting, did I at last know that I had won my heart's desire.

In a few minutes I was able to get on deck, where, to my unspeakable relief, I found Martin, the cook, and Alf all sheltered safely in the galley.

Apparently, the port anchor had held in the end—at least there was a firm strain on the cable, which



mitigated the action of the little seas in forcing the schooner against the coral.

Martin and the others had managed to get in the slack of the wire hawser I spoke about; so that we were, in fact, made fast head and stern, with our port side jammed on to the island.

The fore-topmast had carried away, and being held by its gear, hung alongside.

It was now daylight, the glass had risen, and the wind undoubtedly taken off very much. The cook lit a fire in the galley, we got into dry clothes, and in about half-an-hour coffee was ready.

Warmth, a hot drink, and the promise of the sun, all gave new heart and hope to men whom weariness, wet, and darkness had held in their evil embrace for many anxious hours.

‘Things might ha’ bin a damned sight wus,’ was the opinion of Martin Johnston—a view which I heartily endorsed. Our whale boat had not suffered any harm; there was abundance of provisions, and we had a reasonable hope that the schooner had received no mortal injury. While, as to floating her, ‘sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.’ And so we drank our coffee and cracked a biscuit that morning, not sorrowing wholly.

For myself, I seemed to see the sun smiling through its tears—that for which I now cared most on earth was with me. What could I wish better?

The very island, with a new washed face, looked towards the recovered skies, with a strange freshness, the reflection perhaps of my own roseate thoughts.

CHAPTER XVI

H.M.S. *ALBATROSS*—THE GOOD SAMARITAN

AFTER breakfast we took stock of our position. Save the accident to the topmast, the schooner had taken little or no harm aloft, but as she lay with sloped spars and bare exposed hull the question of getting her off into deep water was an awkward riddle for our small company to answer.

It was now low tide. The second anchor had indeed proved of use, for it had prevented the vessel getting so far up the shelving bank as to make the launching of her an impossibility to us.

The stern line had likewise not been without service. I felt sure that it had materially controlled the range of the vessel's grinding and rubbing.

Now what damage had happened to the hull? She was not leaking—so much was certain—at least nothing to signify.

But the rudder was immovable, and we feared for it, and for the stern post as well.

We went below into the run, but failed, from the interior of the ship, to find any evidence of grave injury.

One of the first things we did during the day was to get stout hawsers from the lower mastheads to the shore, both to port and starboard, and there make them fast. We next got the whale boat hoisted out. There was space and water to float her on the port side, between the ship and the shore. We took her outside, and with a hand-lead sounded all round the stranded schooner. To our satisfaction we discovered that the bank or shelf on which she lay was steep to. Thus, if we could lighten the ship (she shifted, by the way, without ballast) and get her stirred at all, there undoubtedly existed a fair chance of her slipping off into deep water.

All these matters took many hours, and it was night before we had concluded such necessary labours.

My chief cause of anxiety was, of course, the condition of the rudder, and the fear that damage had been done to the immersed side of the vessel, which lay beyond our reach, or beyond our powers of repair. Nevertheless, we did not think so evilly of the chances if for no other reason than that she remained so tight.

The gale had played sad havoc in the islet; leaves and nuts were gone, and gaunt stumps and prostrate trunks bore eloquent testimony to the strength of the wind.

The week following the storm found us very fully employed. The cook turned to and worked with the rest of us, while Hester cooked for all hands.

First, we cleared away the wreck of the fore-topmast, and got the yards ashore.

We next began to get the cargo and stores landed.

This was a big job, for we had to build a kind of staging between the shore and the vessel.

Ashore we made a kind of basement of broken coral on which to store everything we took out of the ship. We left several stout trees growing in the space occupied by this coral flooring, and by a careful use of stays and purchases, we made gear attached to the trees serve in place of a yard tackle in handling the goods between the ship and their resting place. At night we covered them with old sails. Most of the stuff was within the handling powers of our small company.

Some of it, however—the buoys and moorings—we left untouched.

We next tackled the ballast.

During this exploration and clearing out of the hold several dead rats were encountered, and their remains were solemnly cremated. One or two live rats were also seen, but they were apparently in excellent health. Having now got the ship practically empty, we determined to use some of the disinfectants which formed part of the various goods Captain Leigh was taking to the islands.

Hester made a solution of some preparation of mercury, of great potency and virtue, and with it we mopped down the whole interior of the vessel. Then we pumped water into her, washed out her bilges, cleared her limbers, and pumped her dry again.

In these various sanitary measures the forecastle and the accommodation aft received full attention.

All this time the little hooker lay quiet and snug, and took no further harm. We were letting the

rudder trouble stand over till the advent of spring tides, when we hoped that the increased range would allow us at ebb to free it, and afterwards to float the ship off at the top of the flood. And to assist in this purpose we carried out another anchor from aft besides that already down, so as to heave the schooner off sideways.

The various events and duties which I have recounted had carried us on to the 8th of July, a Sunday, and chiefly a day of rest. I had taken Hester out in the whale boat, and we had sailed round to the lee side of the islet.

The view of the horizon between north and west had just opened out as we passed the end of the atoll, when, simultaneously, an object caught our eyes.

‘A sail!’ we both exclaimed at once.

‘How exciting!’ said Hester.

‘Dash my wig, Hess,’ I said, ‘we haven’t got the glasses with us. What a nuisance!’

But glasses were hardly necessary, though I was mad to think I hadn’t got them. I could have devoured that ship, so keen was I to know all about her.

‘What do you think of her?’ Hester asked.

‘She’s a man-of-war,’ I made answer, ‘that’s certain. She’s not a chicken, either, I should say, and she’s probably British.’

I looked at her again, long and attentively.

‘I bet I know her, dear,’ I remarked at last. ‘I’m almost sure she’s the *Albatross*, a surveying ship.’

I knew the vessel well; and I thought I could not be mistaken. I had been several times on board her

in Sydney. Her first lieutenant and his wife were my personal friends.

‘Well, hadn’t we better attract their attention in some way?’ said my companion. ‘What shall we do?—scream, wave a handkerchief, or make a smoke?’

‘I don’t think any of these things are necessary,’ I replied. ‘You watch her. She’s stopped! And they are manning a boat! However, we had better show ourselves.’

We pulled for the south side of the boat passage and landed, and stood on the dryest place we could find, whilst the giant rollers, spending themselves in creamy spray, came to our very feet. The noise of their breaking was ear-deafening when so close. There was a pretty fair jump of a sea on, so the boat of the man-of-war had to exercise some caution in entering the passage. When they came near enough to speak, the officer in charge hailed me—

‘Can we come in here?’

‘Yes. It’s quite safe with ordinary caution. Watch for a smooth!’ I shouted back to him.

‘All right,’ he sang out, and in a few minutes the fine, able little craft was within the lagoon and lying alongside our grimy old whaler. You could read the consuming curiosity in the eyes of the lieutenant and his crew. But with true British reticence he scarcely asked a question, but waited for us to enlighten him. Meanwhile he made talk bravely.

‘Rather a surprise to us to find you here. This island isn’t charted—has been reported, though. Admiral hardly believed it. However, he sent us down to have a look. Glad to meet you. Nothing

new in the world nowadays. Suppose you have got an up-to-date legislature here, payment of members, and everything else, eh?’

Thus he rattled on. He was evidently a waggish fellow. Curiosity and admiration struggling in his fresh, rather boyish, face, and as he looked at Hester one knew his thoughts ran something like this:—

‘How on earth came these two people, one of them a lovely lady’ (I use his own subsequent expression) ‘on an unknown island in the South Pacific? Who are they?’

Presently he walked across to Hester and began a conversation in exactly the same style as if he had met her at a Government House garden party.

‘Awfully hot, isn’t it? Anything to see or do ashore?’

‘It is rather warm,’ said Hester. ‘There are few amusements here. You will find it dull if you are making a stay. Won’t you come round to the other side and let me give you tea?’

‘Thanks awfully! Delighted later on, if you’ll ask me, don’t you know! But the fact is, I must be off at once. Captain wants to see if we can get our ship inside the reef. I didn’t quite catch your name.’

‘Leigh is my name,’ returned Hester. ‘I also failed,’ she added, with a twinkle in her eye, ‘to catch yours.’

‘Ah, my name? Almost forgot it—so hot, don’t you know. It’s Drury, however; belong to that ship there, the *Albatross*. Fancy I’ve met you, Miss Leigh, in Sydney. But I really must be off, or I’ll get a wiggling.’

He still never asked us a word of who or what we were. It was delightfully British and wholly admirable. But I had mercy, else he had surely died of curiosity.

I therefore gave him the outline of our story, to which he listened with interest strong in his eyes and attitude.

I told him about the ship passage, and that I thought it safe for the *Albatross*.

He thanked me, but said that he would nevertheless have to examine it in person, otherwise his captain would not be satisfied. He evidently had a very clear idea of the work he was sent to do, and I guessed him to be a smart sailorman in spite of his casual manner—and that he was so I was afterwards assured by his shipmates. Thank goodness, the naval officer seems to know his job, which is more than can be said of half the men who hold commissions in the army.

We parted for the time, and he pushed off to carry out his duty.

‘Weren’t his “company manners” delicious?’ said Hester, when we were once more by ourselves. ‘But what a rencontre! It reminded me of “Dr. Livingstone, I presume?” in Stanley’s travels. We’re a curious race. Imagine a Frenchman under similar circumstances. He would scatter his emotions and his arms to the four winds in his first sentence of greeting. And this young man only thought “it awful hot, don’t you know!”’ Hester mimicked him till I laughed ‘my ribs loose’—to quote the vernacular of Alf Nash.

We now sailed or pulled home, and gave our ship-mates the news. They had seen nothing of the newcomers, for all three had spent Sunday afternoon in sound sleep. The man-of-war's men were too busy examining the entrance and looking for a berth for their ship, as it was likely she might remain at Pandora Island for some time. Hence our crew had remained undisturbed, and unconscious of the advent of strangers.

As I afterwards was told, the island had been reported some six months previously by a small trader. The admiral had, therefore, in rather a sceptical spirit, ordered the *Albatross* to seek for, and if found, 'to make a note of it.' Naturally, during the survey of the place, the ship would be sheltered inside the reef, if it were feasible to get her there.

There was good reason for the doubting attitude of the admiral, because the part of the ocean where our island lay must have been traversed by many keels; and it was strange that no trader's eye had lighted on it years ago.

By six o'clock that evening the *Albatross* was anchored very nearly in the *Pandora's* old berth, and I was shaking hands with my friend the first lieutenant, Gerald Ocksap by name.

Nothing could exceed the kindness of the captain. He at once put his cabin at Hester's disposal; and to me he offered every help in the matter of the schooner.

On the day following, we dined on board the *Albatross*. I do not know what fairy tales our people had told the crew of the man-of-war, but the interest

and homage paid to Hester was really quite touching. When she got into the boat sent to fetch us she had on some simple white frock and thin shoes, and the manner in which boat-cloaks and other weather-dodging gear were stuck about made her half shy—she was so evidently the object of respectful admiration to the ship's company.

At dinner I was introduced to the surgeon, to whom I recounted the main incidents of the outbreak of plague, and the means of disinfection we had adopted. He approved of all our precautions, but wished us to use some further fumigation by means of a new substance, the name of which I have forgotten. He offered to carry out the process for us, and very kindly did so before we left the island. We enjoyed the dinner immensely; and it gave me no small pleasure to see how much my dear one was admired. After dinner I left Hester to be entertained by the doctor and the captain while I went and smoked, and talked to Ocksap.

‘I say, old chap,’ he asked at length, ‘you must forgive the curiosity of a friend of some standing, but are you engaged to Miss Leigh? I see you call each other by your Christian names, and one reads between the lines. Hope you don’t think I’m a bounder, asking you such a question, but I should be more than human if I didn’t.’

‘Well,’ I answered, ‘I see no reason why I should not tell you. Yes, we are engaged.’

‘Well, I congratulate you. Heavens, how my little girl at home would revel in a piece of real romance like this! I suppose I may tell her all about it?’

At this I laughed and shrugged my shoulders in non-committal fashion.

It was now time to go, so the boat was called away and we were soon on board our lop-sided domicile, looking small indeed after the *Albatross*.

‘Dick, you bad boy,’ remarked Hess as we said good night, ‘what did you tell that merry-eyed little first lieutenant?’

I looked innocent and answered, ‘The truth, madam. Was it well? And is it well?’

And it was well. I was forgiven.

The following day the ship’s carpenter and a diver made a thorough examination of the hull of the *Pandora*, and found that nothing was seriously damaged.

The rudder was jammed against some coral, and she had lost some copper. ‘Barked ’er shins, an’ got a gravel rash on ’er bilge,’ as the highly medical Mr. Alf Nash explained to some inquiring blue-jackets. Luckily the vessel’s sternpost was uninjured.

It was during this day and that evening that the surveyors took their first observations for longitude. And, perhaps just a little to my surprise, and certainly to my satisfaction, the Greenwich mean time obtained from lunar observations by me was a pretty correct one, as my longitude by lunar only differed about nine and a half miles from their longitude by chronometer.

It would, I fear, weary my readers, except those keen on technical details, were I to tell them minutely of the various measures taken to get the *Pandora* afloat. As a matter of fact it was not a very difficult job. Once we got movement on her hull she slid off the edge of coral very quickly. The bank, I think I told you, was

very steep to. The empty hull and a good spring tide were of course the essentials. Martin and I both thought we could have managed the job alone. But we would have been hard put to it to free the rudder without the aid of the diver. We had one hawser to the opposite shore of the cove in which she had stranded, and steady strains were kept going on the cable and on the anchor we had laid out. Some movement was given to the hull by swaying alternately on the masthead lines.

These measures sufficed without invoking the aid of the *Albatross* herself. I was glad of this, for I did not wish to be the cause of one of H.M. ships running any risk in salvage work in such narrow waters. Anyway, the floating was accomplished with great éclat, and we quickly got our two anchors. The steam launch now towed us to a convenient berth where the two ships could swing clear of each other; and the work of reloading the vessels quickly proceeded.

I never till now realised how laborious a process the making of charts really is. We Britishers are practically the chief cartographers of the world. And, when made, the charts are sold at prices which in no case can ever cover the expense of their production. Take that of Pandora Island for instance; not the plan which is in this book—I drew it—but the splendid and accurate map which the Admiralty will issue later on. Here was a vessel of about one thousand tons, with between one and two hundred men, lying at this lonely spot for a number of weeks. Think of the labour and the expense, and all to produce a small chart, at a price from between half-a-crown and five

shillings—perhaps three hundred copies being sold. Still, a great maritime nation must needs do such work.

I do not know that anyone has written a popular account of the work of this most useful branch of our Navy. The officers of the survey branch are, I suppose, the most scientific in the service. I need only mention Cook, Fitzroy, Franklin, Owen Stanley, or Wharton to emphasize this fact. And I am sure they are the most laborious. Our casual friend, Drury, I discovered, was a mine of mathematics and sea lore, hidden under the ‘don’t-you-know’ drawl of a fine gentleman.

Half the crew were away in boats all day, and the rest seemed fully occupied; and neither Hester nor I half liked having so many sailors away from their ship working for us. They made us a new topmast, and helped us to refit all the damaged gear; in fact there was no end to their kindness.

Both of us felt we must have some sort of an understanding with the captain. It was all very well to succour the distressed, but they never seemed tired of doing something extra for us. What with floating us, loading us, and refitting us, and finally the promise to lend me four seamen, one felt very deeply in the debt of the British Navy as represented by the *Albatross*. We wished to discuss the matter with the captain of the *Albatross*, and he invariably put us off, which worried us both.

We, therefore, asked him to dine with us on the *Pandora*, and there we thrashed the matter out. That evening, before he returned to his ship, I had a quiet talk with him.

He began by telling me that he would lend me four hands to work the schooner to Apia, where I would probably meet the admiral.

I thanked him in Miss Leigh's name and my own, and I further said that, as much more had been done for us than the actual necessities of our predicament had demanded, we wished to pay the Imperial Government for the services of his men. This he would not hear of. But, at last, he agreed that Miss Leigh, without contravening any usage of the service, might give a donation to a certain fund the blue-jackets had started on his ship. Hester gladly gave a good sum of money. But she and I both told him, and asked that the crew should know it, that we appreciated their kindness and help in a way that money could not repay.

He knew, of course, of my engagement to Miss Leigh; and I told him generally how it had come about. As he was a man much older than I was, and in command of a man-of-war, and, above all, a kindly man of common sense, I asked him what he thought best for Miss Leigh to do—whether to go on with me, or to stay, as he had invited her, as his guest, till the *Albatross* went to Sydney or Auckland.

'My dear Blackburne,' he replied, 'if my ship were going back at once I should certainly advise your fiancée to return in her. But, you see, I cannot leave this place till the survey is complete. Hence I certainly cannot advise Miss Leigh to stay on here, nor can I see any good reason why she should not go on with the *Pandora*. Take my advice, my boy, and leave it to her.'

When this kind man had gone, Hester and I leaned over the rail, looking at his ship, whilst we talked the matter all over and discussed the various pros and cons.

‘Now, Hess, you must decide yourself. Which will you do?’ I said.

Her reply settled the matter.

‘You dear and very proper person, fate made me dependent on your skill and your honour. You are my husband to be. Except for you I feel alone. I have had enough of partings, and I shall sail with you, sweetheart—Mrs. Grundy notwithstanding.’

Next morning I told the captain her decision. He laughed and said :

‘Well done, Miss Leigh! For my part I think you’re quite right in your decision. By the way, young lady, I had forgotten one of my powers. I believe, in emergencies, a man-of-war captain is empowered to marry persons so desiring, at least he used so to do, unless the plethora of parsons has stopped the practice. I was intended for the church, and I am very ready to take on the function of a parson now. Shall I?’

Hester reddened under her sun-browned skin as she answered prettily that he had already done her so many kindnesses that she could not accept this last obligation.

And thus ended the matter.

CHAPTER XVII

TOWARDS APIA, A DIGRESSION, AND A TRAGEDY BY THE WAY

EARLY one morning, before the trade wind had gathered weight, we began to heave in our chain. How different was our present sailing from the maimed condition in which we had first groped our way into the unbroken solitude of this ultimate island.

Renewed health, a sufficient crew, and a wholesome stout vessel, made truly a very different setting out, from what our plight was, when we first saw this lonely spot.

As a last courtesy to us the steam pinnace was sent to give us a pluck through the entrance in the reef. This was a great comfort, nay a necessity, for what trifling wind there was was from the south-east, and consequently dead on end for getting through the passage.

My good friend the first lieutenant, together with the surgeon and Drury, came with us to see the schooner get an offing.

Our crew made quick work of heaving short. Then

we broke ground, and while the anchor was being secured we were soon towed down to the entrance, which Ocksap said they intended to chart as 'Sunday Passage', after the day on which the *Albatross* entered it.

I was in some little doubt as to the power of the pinnace to bring us safely out should there chance to be anything of a swell setting into the lagoon. Happily my fears were groundless, and a few minutes sufficed to put us clear of the reef, and the *Pandora* once more found herself on the long heave of the Pacific, which on that day certainly deserved its name.

The pinnace took us out to the east, and we rapidly made sail and cast off the towline.

We hove the schooner to just about abreast of the boat-passage, and then the steamer came alongside.

'Good-bye, Miss Leigh,' said Ocksap, coming forward to the break of the little poop, 'I hope to see you in Sydney, and there you must meet my wife. I wish her to know you.'

'Good-bye, Mr. Ocksap. I shall make a point of meeting your wife. I cannot thank the *Albatrosses* enough for all their countless kindnesses to us.'

The lieutenant bowed and shook hands. He walked towards the rail and I went with him.

'Blackburne,' he said, as we reached the gangway, 'we must be off, or the skipper'll think we've deserted. For myself, I wish I could be forcibly detained.' Then, lowering his voice, he added, 'Good-bye again, my boy! I hope you realise what a pearl beyond price you have had the luck to win.' He pressed my

hand and dropped into the boat, in which the others were already seated.

We now let the headsails draw, and two hands went aloft to loose the topsail and topgallantsail and overhaul the gear. We quickly gathered way, for the wind had hardened a good deal since we got outside, and the pinnace was rapidly dwindling in size. Her crew gave us a parting cheer, the sound of which came down to us on the wind.

We replied and dipped our ensign and, with our head at nor-nor-west, we felt that we were fairly off. Martin and I picked each two men, which made three in a watch. Should we have had weather, the cook and Alf, in addition, would give us four hands if required. But with a fair wind all the way, this was not a likely contingency, and we soon settled down into the ordinary sea routine.

After the troubled events of the earlier part of the voyage, the quiet monotony of the next few days was infinitely restful. These halcyon times were not, however, to continue indefinitely.

Old ocean had something yet to show us of the sorrow and privation which may fall to the lot of those 'who do business in great waters.' But of that later on. Just then all was peace.

One morning, soon after we left Pandora Island, I had the morning watch; it was just daylight, and the incomparable glory of a tropic dawn was upon the sea. I often think that town dwellers lose half the pleasure of their lives by missing nature in her most striking aspects.

Whether at sea, in the bush, or on the veldt, the

advent of another day comes to my eyes with a glory and freshness which seem to be always new. The shadows of night begin to lose their depth, and the innumerable army of stars take on a delicate wanness as the rays of the sun shoot upward.

The horizon line for a short time becomes more clearly defined, and in this strange twilight it is easy to take observations. On shore, too, the shapes of tree or hill take on definiteness, the ugliness and bareness of fuller day is softened. Even a dirty town may look lovely under the magic light of early morning.

In the deep'ning of dawn when it dapples
The dusk of the sky,
With streaks like the redd'ning of apples,
The ripening of rye.
To eastward, when cluster by cluster,
Dim stars and dull planets, that muster,
Wax wan in a world of white lustre
That spreads far and high.

These beautiful lines, which were written of the coming of daylight in the Australian bush, are equally applicable to dawn upon the ocean.

How often, as a boy, have I drunk in such a scene, standing voiceless with admiration—I had almost written adoration—as the great luminary began to show his rim above the eastern horizon? But ‘this speaking, this impressive silence’ is soon broken in upon. I hear the short ‘turn to’ of the mate of the watch; I seize a brush or a bucket, and the work of the day in all its commonplace ugliness swiftly banishes the fancies that for a brief space had filled my mind.

Such a morning was this of which I write. I turned to the illumined sea rim, and by-and-by the golden limb of the sun himself appeared above the horizon.

I went to the compass as he rose from the glowing waters, and took his bearing; amplitude* is the term used by sailors.

This observed bearing is compared with the true direction of the sun as deduced by spherical trigonometry, and the difference is the error of the compass.

In the case of our ship, which was built of wood, the error found was the variation; for, not being made of iron, the *Pandora* had no appreciable deviation.

As I took this common observation, the stanzas of Falconer, in his 'Shipwreck,' came into my mind. It must have been difficult indeed to clothe the dry process of finding the compass error by altitude azimuth† in the pleasant garments of poetry. Yet he did it, and the following are his learned lines. The description may well endure as a correct record of one of the methods of navigation of a bygone race of sailors—a method which still lives lustily, at least in examination papers.

The pilots now their azimuth attend,
On which all courses, duly formed, depend :
The compass placed to catch the rising ray,
The quadrant's shadows studious they survey ;

* Amplitude is the bearing of a heavenly body, when rising or setting, reckoned from the true east or west point of the horizon.

† Azimuth is the bearing of an elevated body, reckoned from true north or south.

Along the arch the gradual index slides,
While Phæbus down the vertic-circle glides ;
Now seen on ocean's utmost verge to swim,
He sweeps it vibrant with his nether limb.
Thus height and polar distance are obtained ;
Then latitude, and declination, gained ;
In chiliads next the analogy is sought,
And on the sinical triangle wrought :
By this magnetic variance is explored,
Just angles known, and polar truth restored.

Falconer may, perhaps, not have written poetry of the highest type, but he is *the* one poet who wrote poetry which also contains correct seamanship, for Falconer was a consummate seaman first, and a poet afterwards.

It is of interest also to note how quaintly and pleasantly the common language of the sea is used in the poem of 'The Shipwreck.' The work itself deserves to live, if for no other reason than that it preserves in liquid verse much of the seamanship of the day. A noble art which in these times of steam and electricity promises soon to be a lost one. It shows, too, that little ships in those times went to sea with big crews ; and, better still, that these crews were British seamen, and not the mixed crowd of Dutchmen and Dagoes which fills the fore-castle of our merchant ships ; and which, still worse, is beginning to push its way on to the bridge and the poop as well.

This creeping in of foreign seamen, and the disappearance of the British sailor from our mercantile marine, is, to my mind, one of the most serious menaces to the greatness and continuance of the Empire. Imagine a country like Great Britain, which is, in the main, dependent on sea-borne food supplies,

permitting the corn and meat, on which her very existence hangs, to be brought to her shores in ships, owned perhaps in England, but manned by foreigners, who on an outbreak of war might hand over the ships they sail to the enemy. An evil and suggestive fact also, is the small popularity of the sea as a profession, especially among Australian boys.

Better pay, better food in deep-water ships, better accommodation, restrictions as to the number of foreign seamen employed, and perhaps a revived form of apprenticeship, are all methods by which it is possible to bring about a more hopeful state of affairs and increase the number of British or colonial-born men who follow the sea, and who will man our merchant ships and add to the numbers of a Naval Reserve for defence purposes in times of national emergency.

This small record of a humble voyage is not the place, I admit, to discuss these great and pressing subjects. Nevertheless, it is worth while, in season and out of season, to call attention to this immensely important matter. I commend the consideration of it to every British or Australian subject of the Queen. It is absolutely astounding to contemplate the ignorance of the average man in affairs of the sea. And this is the most maritime Empire in the world! It would indeed be well if the country would arouse itself from its criminal indifference in the matter, else one day it may awake to find the carrying trade of the world in the hands of foreigners, and Great Britain in a condition of surrender, owing to the fact that the over-sea grain ships had been carried over to the enemy by their alien crews.

We must, I suppose, sadly accept the fact that the art of seamanship—that is, the management of a sailing ship—must pass away, and a new seamanship of steam take its place. Doubtless, a great art this, in its way, for the taking of a ten-thousand-ton vessel through a crowded channel needs skill and knowledge of a very high order. Nevertheless, I question if ever the assemblage of qualities which made the ‘Sailor of the Sail’ the many-sided man he was, can be learned on a steamer. The minute observation of barometer, sea and sky; the management of the ship under a hundred diverse conditions of wind and weather; all find their true school on a ‘wind-jammer.’ Only on her deck, and in her airy breadths of canvas does the true sailorman learn his trade. The man who is in very truth

Lord of the Bunt and Gasket, and Master of the Yard,
To whom no land was distant, to whom no sea was barred.

Who battled with the current, who conquered with the wind,
Who shaped the course before him by the wake he threw behind.

Who on the space of waters has fought the killing gale,
Has heard the crying of the spar, the moaning of the sail.

Who followed Drake, who fought with Blake, who broke the bar of
Spain,
And who to timid traffic gave the Freedom of the Main.

But this strange and pathetic figure will gradually disappear, and with him also the giant wings of canvas which he controlled. In their place the ‘black squad’ shovel, the kettle boils, the bell rings, and the screw revolves. The sailor of the past is represented by a deck hand, who understands brass-work and paint cleaning, and not much else.

How lads are to be trained to deal with the great emergencies of the sea, outside a sailing ship, is not easy to understand. It is, indeed, not a little difficult to feel confidence in the seamanship of a man who has not spent his youth under the noble umbrage of stately mast and far-reaching yard, and whose ear cannot correctly interpret all the diverse sounds which come from these soaring heights, the creak of a parral, the cheep of a block, and the thunderous flap of spilled canvas. But the answer to all these hankerings after a vanished life is that the old sea-lore must die and a new one be born.

My reader must really forgive me for this long digression. Where was I? Let me see! I had the morning watch and I had just taken an observation to find the Error of the Compass.

One of the men was aloft on some job when he hailed the deck saying that away on the starboard bow he saw something, the nature of which he could not quite make out. I went below, got my glasses, and climbed aloft.

Presently the object swam into the circle of the lenses; and, so far as I could say, it was either a boat or a piece of wreckage.

‘Haul her up two points,’ I sang out to the man at the wheel.

This was done, and presently our bowsprit pointed clean for the object, whatever it was. I returned on deck and sent word down to Hester to come up as soon as she could.

In less than an hour the boat, for such it was, was pretty close aboard.

It was obviously a good-sized ship's lifeboat, painted white, and floating high. She was rigged as a yawl, but had nothing set save a tiny reefed mizzen; and, further, we saw that she lay to a sea anchor.

'Oh, Dick,' said Hester to me, 'do you think there is anyone on board?'

'No, dear,' I replied, with the telescope at my eye; 'I can see no one, but we shall know for a certainty in a very few minutes. Here is the glass. Look for yourself.'

'There is something moving in the boat,' she presently called again, 'and part of it is alive. I am sure I saw a movement.'

Once more I took the glass, and without doubt I saw there were people in the boat; and I realised that we were about to witness the end of some ocean tragedy.

However, a few minutes more would tell us everything, and I laid down the telescope. Hester went forward to the galley, as I afterwards discovered, to see that there was plenty of hot water ready. I lent a hand in getting our boat clear for lowering.

As we swept past the nearly stationary craft, I saw at a glance that her occupants were in no position to board us. So I brought the schooner to the wind, and sent off Martin and two of the men to bring her alongside. This took some little time, as Martin would not cut adrift their sea anchor, but carefully hauled it in. It was composed of oars, with their jib and kellick—a neat and seaman-like job.

Fortunately the wind was light and the sea smooth, so the whole business of getting the boat alongside.

and its helpless occupants on deck, was not very difficult.

Our crew clustered to the lee rail as our boat brought the stranger to the gangway. We were all alive with curiosity, which quickly changed to deep sympathy as we took in the grimness and horror of this drama of the sea.

How can one do justice in words to the desperate picture of sorrow and privation which rose and fell in the boat before our eyes? She was a good, wholesome lump of a craft, and in her lay several men, two women, and an infant. All the men save one were obviously dead.

Across the face of a sailor was a track of dark-coloured blood, which had oozed from a wound in his forehead. At his side lay a revolver. The skin of his face was drawn and sere, and his retracted lips disclosed a serrated row of discoloured broken teeth. He was dressed in blue dungaree trousers tucked into his half boots. His jumper lay open, showing a mossy breast covered with tattooing.

About the boat, in various attitudes, lay the other seamen, all dead.

In the stern sheets, reclining in a strained attitude, was a man, probably an officer. His head was sunk forwards, while his right arm encircled the neck of one of the women, whose head and shoulders lay half across his breast. They were prevented from slipping wholly down by the left arm of the man, which hung over the side with the rigidity of comparatively recent death. The hand was gone from the arm, evidently torn off by some passing shark, and the

bare white tendons lazily streamed in the water like loose ribbons.

He seemed to be a man of about thirty, probably an officer, as I said, and perhaps the husband of the dead woman by his side.

This poor lady was young, comely, and refined-looking. Even the manner of her death had not robbed her face of beauty; nor could life have departed many hours previously.

In her arms, secured by a shawl, in a last grasp of love, lay a little baby, apparently only a few months old.

It was yet alive, and from the dry shrunk breast of its mother it feebly sought for the nourishment of which death had robbed it. Its cry had sunk to a voiceless whisper, and it seemed certain that it could not long outlast its mother.

On the gratings aft lay two other occupants of the boat. One, a girl in the flush of early womanhood, perhaps two-and-twenty, was still alive. She raised herself feebly as the boat came alongside; but her eyes, reddened with salt water and fierce sunlight, showed that she did not realise her rescue.

Her face and lips were cracked and burnt, and her tongue was visible, dry and brown. It seemed indeed doubtful if she would live to tell her story.

Beside her on the grating lay a third sufferer, a man, youngish, say about five-and-twenty, and strangely like in feature to the girl, who pillowed his head upon her lap. He was likewise still alive, but evidently far spent.

Very carefully we got the two surviving adults and

the baby on board, and it was at this juncture that Hester showed us once more what a wholly admirable and useful training that of a nurse can be.

The castaways were quickly got below, and we left them to her to do the best she could for them.

The dead men and the poor lady we also got on board. From each we took what trifling valuables they possessed ; and from the lady and the officer we cut off locks of hair. Of all we wrote down a brief description for purposes of identification. These matters finished, we quickly prepared the bodies for burial.

From the boat we removed a chronometer, a couple of sextants, and a few other articles. The timekeeper had stopped, which showed that two days, at any rate, of complete helplessness must have passed.

There were some damp biscuits and a tin or two of meat, but not one drop of water. God knows how long they had been without a drink, but one could interpret much of their story without words. On thinking the matter over I determined for various reasons to hoist the boat on board.

This was done, and we stowed it on the hatch in the space which our own big cargo boat had formerly occupied.

The name of the ship to which she had belonged was the *Marion C. Colborne*, of Portland, Maine. So we knew at least the nationality of the people we had rescued.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE STORY OF THE *MARION C. COLBORNE*

BREAKFAST was soon over, and the forenoon of the day on which we picked up the survivors of the American ship *Marion C. Colborne* passed quickly ; mid-day was upon me almost before I knew it. I had not slept, nor, in fact, left the deck, so much was there to see to. I got a meridian altitude and went below to work out our position at noon.

I found Hester full of work and excitement.

‘What’s your report? How are they getting on?’ I asked.

‘Of the baby I have no hope whatever,’ she replied, with a catch in her voice.

‘Yes, but how about the others?’ I said.

‘They are both alive,’ replied Hester. ‘I feel sure that the girl will live, for she is strong and well nourished. The man I am not so confident about. He looks ill, apart from thirst and exposure.’

‘Does the girl talk rationally?’ I inquired.

‘That is the odd thing, Dick! She is utterly weak, of course; yet she takes food, says she is feeling better, and shows an evident and deep interest in the

infant. Nevertheless, she neither knows her own name, nor the name of the ship, nor the date, nor indeed anything about her immediate past. What do you think of that? Is it going to be permanent?’

‘Oh,’ I answered, ‘she will remember everything in a few days! I’ve twice fallen in with men who had been lost—one in the backblocks of New South Wales, and the other on the open veldt in South Africa. The latter a soldier. How he got lost in such a place goodness only knows, except that he was a Tommy, to whom all such things are possible.

‘Both these men looked as these people look—ashy, drawn, fatuous, and quite forgetful of time. The soldier I spoke of didn’t even know his name or regiment. Yet he and the “sun-downer” both recovered their memory in a few days. Wait, Hess, and see what sleep and beef tea will do for them.’

‘How I hope you will be a true prophet,’ said Hess. ‘I do wish them to get better; and, goodness, how I do burn to know their story!’

After dinner, about four bells, I was again in charge of the deck, when Hester came up to ask me to go with her and see the baby, as she feared it was dying.

I went to her cabin, and found that the poor little mite had been washed in warm water, rubbed with oil, and wrapped in a soft blanket. Hester had fed it with sips of condensed milk and brandy.

Its sunken, yet staring eyes, its aged, wrinkled appearance, and the sinking in on the top of its head, where the bones had not yet come together, made its aspect ominous even to the most ignorant eye. A

more complete picture of depressed vital powers could hardly be imagined.

‘Oh, Dick!’ said my dear one, ‘I am afraid we are looking upon death. Think what it all means! I would to God I could keep it alive. But it’s dying now, even as we stand by it.’

‘Perhaps, dear girl,’ said I, with a keen sense of how length of days serves a good many folk in this life, ‘it is happier away, orphaned and perhaps friendless. The charity of this world is pretty chill, sweetheart.’

‘Dick! Dick!’ she cried, ‘I would have looked after it always, if no one claimed it. The sea has thrown it on my love and protection. And now it is leaving me.’

It is indeed not a bad index of the character of a woman to see how she manages children and ‘takes to babies,’ as old women express it. I never knew a woman yet who had an antipathy to young children who possessed a wholly wholesome personality. It is an instinct in a healthy-minded normal woman. It is rather trying when it is perverted and finds a vicarious outlet in a foolish and disgusting fondness for cats and dogs. One may do one’s best to forgive it as evidence of unused maternal feelings; but it is certainly very annoying to live in a house where pampered poodles dominate the situation.

If ever these primal instincts of fondness and care for the helpless and the young shone in a woman’s eyes they did now in Hester’s, as she bent over the dying infant and kissed its chill face. She laid her cheek against my shoulder and cried quietly, and

asked me to be sure to bury the poor little thing with its mother. And this of course I promised.

Then she closed the poor child's staring eyes, and we both turned away. As we did so I saw her lips move and caught her whispered words, 'For of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.'

Late in the afternoon was the sad scene of a burial at sea enacted once more in this strange voyage—a voyage in which more events and incidents had been crowded together than in all the laborious years of my previous seafaring.

The dead mother, with the babe she could not save, went first; then her husband (as we afterwards came to know), and lastly the seamen.

With the last sullen plunge it seemed as if a heavy cloud had been raised from our hearts. We brought the schooner again upon her course, and once more felt the strong thrust of the trade wind and the swing of the vessel in the following sea as we rapidly left the neighbourhood of so much sorrow and so much pain.

We made excellent runs during the days immediately following the rescue of the castaways, and during this time both the girl and the young man made good progress towards recovery.

The girl's memory came back, but, of course, as she realised her losses, she remained profoundly depressed. But she took heart when she found that her brother (for the likeness of their features was here a true indication of the blood tie) was alive and likely to mend.

He, poor chap, was very weak, and told us that he

had recently been laid up with fractured ribs received in a gale, in which a spare topmast lashed on deck got adrift and jammed him against the rail.

Little by little we gathered their story. Their vessel was the *Marion C. Colborne*, of 1400 tons, a wooden North American built ship. The captain was their brother—indeed, the ship was largely owned by their father, who was a man possessing considerable shipping interests in the State of Maine.

From the girl we learned that the lady and the baby had been her brother's wife and child, whilst the officer we had saved was second mate of the ship.

The vessel had been in the Pacific trade for a couple of years. From a lumber port to Sydney, thence to Newcastle, N.S.W., for coal, and thence across to Honolulu, 'Frisco, or the West Coast—such was her usual round. On this last voyage they were bound to Tahiti.

Miss Dorothy Langstaff, for such was her name, had come over from her eastern home, and found the ship in Puget Sound, as she wished to see her brothers and help her sister-in-law, who had only been married a year or two. Thus they were quite a family party in this fine, wholesome craft.

Her brother, Christopher Langstaff, next gave us the outline of the fatal voyage.

From the day of leaving Newcastle, N.S.W., they had bad luck. First foul weather and loss of sails; then the cargo ignited and days of anxiety were passed, in which all the measures which experience has shown to be of value were used in keeping the

smouldering volcano beneath their feet under control. But at last the fire was extinguished, and they began to congratulate themselves that the butt end of their troubles had arrived first and all would now be plain sailing.

But this respite from disaster quickly came to an end, for they ran into bad weather again, during which he had been injured while securing a spare spar which had broken adrift. One man had his skull fractured at the same time and died the next day. They also lost their jib-boom, which took the foretopgallant mast with it. Worse still, three hands were washed overboard off the forecandle head when clearing away the wreckage. Then the vessel, during the gale, got considerably to the nor'ard of her course.

Even after these various troubles hope shone on them again, and new spars would have made the ship look as if she had never met a blow and got a dusting at all. But more evil was still to come. One night the ship apparently struck some wreckage, and began to leak seriously. Neither the donkey engine nor the hand pumps could keep her clear. Most likely she had started a butt-end forwards. At any rate, the water came in from right up in the eyes of the ship and nothing that they could do, from a thrummed sail over the bows to continuous pumping, was able to keep the *Marion C. Colborne* right end up. Finally, they were forced to take to the boats.

In the skipper's boat were his wife, the baby, Miss Langstaff, a coloured girl, eight seamen, and the second mate, who was unfit for duty.

During the first night after leaving the sinking ship

the boats became separated. A course was steered for Samoa, which, lying to leeward in the line of the S.E. Trades, seemed no hard port to fetch.

The following morning a terrifying discovery was made, namely, that a most insufficient supply of water had been put on board. How the oversight had occurred young Langstaff did not know, as during the time in which the coal was a-fire, his brother had taken the most minute care and forethought to equip the boats fully so as to be ready to go in the event of the fire overmastering the crew and forcing them to abandon the vessel. Thus at the very outset of their boat voyage they were confronted by a speedy death from thirst unless they had the luck to run into convenient rain-squalls.

It did not rain. The sun soared through a vault of un pitying blue from dawn to dusk, and parched them with his heat as they drove before the strong wind, with dry lips and sinking hearts.

The grim history of such events at sea repeated itself. Some of the men drank salt water, and died raving.

The coloured girl followed. Each fresh sunrise revealed a new tragedy.

Several unfortunate days of calm cut from them the hopes which strong winds gave of reaching or bringing help before thirst or exhaustion made the boat their common sepulchre. At last, once more, a breeze blew indeed, but it soon hardened into a gale.

Sail was carried as long as possible, but, finally, with sadly diminished numbers and feeble hands, the boat had to be laid to, and rode to a sea anchor for one

long desperate night, during which it seemed as if every soaring rise or breathless plunge would be their last.

In such fashion two distressful days passed by.

Drenched with spray, burnt by the sun, chilled at night, and mad with thirst, a falling sea and less wind found the survivors too weak and too helpless to get the boat on her course. And in this plight they remained till we picked them up. Of the particulars of the intervening time neither the brother nor the sister had any clear remembrance.

Mercifully, therefore, the final scenes of despair, during which one of the men had shot himself, and the captain and his wife were not divided in their death, had been hidden from their sight. Such had been their most sorrowful story.

The wind held steady, and the distance between Pandora Island and Samoa was soon covered. One forenoon we were all pleased to see the island of Tutuila on our starboard bow, a place where, it may be remembered, some of the members of the ill-fated expedition of La Perouse were cut off by the natives.

A run of less than forty miles brought us to the east end of Opolu, on which is situated the town of Apia. We sailed between that island and Tutuila, and late in the afternoon entered our port and let go in seven fathoms. At anchor were several ships of the Australian squadron, among them one bearing the Admiral's flag.

CHAPTER XIX

CONCERNING OUR STAY IN APIA

I SHALL commence this chapter by assuring my readers that I am not going to bore them with any references to Island politics; to the great hurricane; no, not even shall I give an account of a visit to the place which Robert Louis Stevenson, whose memory is dear to many, has made a household word in England and America. All these things have been done *ad nauseam* by every globe-trotting scribbler of either sex who returns home and thinks himself or herself an authority on Greater Britain generally, and the South Seas in particular, on the strength of a voyage round the world in mail steamers of sorts. I know the breed well, and I love them not. The travelled idler, the would-be wise politician, and the literary lady who worries the ship's officers for nautical matter—they are all bores who unconsciously climb to a bad eminence in their profession.

The day following that on which we anchored, we went ashore and reported the loss of the *Marion C. Colborne*.

I made a separate report of our various troubles to

the Admiral—to whom I likewise delivered a mail from the *Albatross*. The authorities did not ask us to undergo quarantine.

Hester and Miss Langstaff were the recipients of various invitations to stay on shore, one of which from her father's agent, an old friend, Hester accepted.

She and the American girl evidently liked each other; and Hester told me she enjoyed the mere fact of seeing a woman again as if it were some strange new experience of life.

The girl's brother, Christopher Langstaff, who turned out an excellent fellow, stayed on board the *Pandora* with me.

It was now necessary, with as little delay as possible, to make up our minds what our next move should be.

Miss Leigh, Mr. Peek, who was her host, and I, therefore talked the matter over after lunch on the broad verandah of Mr. Peek's pleasant home.

'What are our chances of getting a cargo here, or in the Islands just now?' I asked.

'Very small, indeed,' replied Mr. Peek. 'At this moment there is no copra belonging to Captain Leigh ready for shipment; nor is there anything else to fill up with. Hence you will either have to go seeking, which means a long, devious, and uncertain voyage, or else return to Sydney in ballast.'

'Of course,' I said, 'I will discharge all the stores we brought for the stations in which Captain Leigh was interested.'

'Quite so,' replied the agent, 'but it is the return freight which is the difficulty just now. You can

easily understand how we didn't expect your arrival here for some considerable time.'

I was about to propose a solution of the difficulty when my intention was forestalled by Hester.

No one who looks at her face can fail to be struck with the curious blending of strength with sweetness which exists in every line, and in the shapely carriage of her head, and I was not at all surprised when she settled the matter of our next move out of hand. This she might very well take upon herself to do, as she was now the absolute owner of the vessel.

'Mr. Peek, you have just told us that, for the present, we must either go wandering about on the chance of getting a cargo, or that we must return in ballast to New South Wales; in fact make a dead loss of the voyage, with nothing whatever to our credit. Does that describe the case?'

'Yes, Miss Leigh, that is so.'

'Then,' rejoined Hester, 'I am clearly of opinion that if there are no special difficulties of navigation standing in the way, it is best for us to prosecute our original plan and seek for the guano island. What say you, Dick?'

'I was just about to propose the same scheme—if we can get a crew. As to the difficulty of navigation, well, we'll take some time to do it. We'll have to stand right down close-hauled through the South-East Trades till we strike westerly winds before we can make any Easting. However, it can be done, and I think we should do it.'

'I am so glad you agree, if for no other reason than that it would please my poor father. You can-

not think, Mr. Peek, how he had set his heart on the matter. I never knew him so keen on any scheme before. Indeed I regard it as a kind of duty to prosecute the voyage pretty much as he planned it. I am sure this is the right thing to do. You remember father's eagerness over the thing, don't you, Dick?'

I viewed the scheme with rather mingled feelings. In good truth I was so full of my new found happiness that I would only have been too happy to return to Sydney, and let somebody else 'smite the sounding furrows' on our behalf.

My common sense, however, and my respect for Captain Leigh's wishes, told me that what Hester said was not only right from a sentimental point of view, but also that, from a commercial aspect, it was wise to prosecute the voyage. If the quest was worth beginning at all it was still more worth persevering in.

'Well, we shall need men,' I said at last, 'a mate, a few stores, and repairs done. Can we get these things here. Mr. Peek?'

'You can get some Kanakas—good enough sailors. But a mate, at least such a mate as you would tolerate, I cannot promise. The stores we will find you. But, of course, you must expect to pay heavily for them.'

'Now,' said Hester, 'is it finally settled that, if we can get a crew, the *Pandora* sails for the guano island?'

'Yes,' I answered; and so that matter was settled, and our host left us.

'I must be off to the schooner,' I said presently. 'Will you come with me?'

‘I will,’ replied Hester, ‘but wait a moment till I ask Dorothy Langstaff to come with us.’

‘No,’ I said, ‘I wish to talk to you about several things, now that the objective of the voyage is settled.’

‘Well, dear,’ she answered, ‘I believe I know what makes you look so solemn, so we may as well talk first, get the solemnity over, and then take the beautiful American out with us later?’

Mr. Peek’s verandah was broad and cool. The strong moist breath of the sea breeze swept through the palms and made music overhead. Between the stems of the trees we could see the brilliant blue of the sea, and the white flash of breaking waves. No sweeter picture of a tropical home could one wish for. Nevertheless, let me live in a latitude no lower than thirty degrees, where children can grow ruddy cheeks, and one can sleep with a blanket. Anyone else may have, and keep and enjoy, if he can, the glories of the ‘Summer of the World.’

Hester looked across at me from out of her chair.

‘Now, Dick, you begin. You have something to say. What is it?’

‘It is simply this. I don’t like leaving you here to find your way back to Sydney. There won’t be a steamer for a month, as the *Alameda* left the morning of the day we got in.’

‘Richard,’ she replied with a little laugh, ‘by whose orders are you condemned to sail by yourself?’

‘What *do* you mean, Hess?’

‘Why, I intend going to the Island, too?’

I looked at her and saw a quaint shy look in her face.

‘But, dear, do you——? I mean, are you——?’

‘Am I going to run off with you?’ she broke in.

‘No! Not exactly! Miss Langstaff and her brother don’t want to go back to America just now.’

I began to see daylight.

‘Miss Langstaff,’ continued Hester, ‘left home (but this is a deadly secret) partly because she wished to avoid the attentions of a man whom she didn’t want to marry. I know that she’d like to stay with me. I shall therefore ask her to come with us as my guest.’

‘Her brother, I am pretty certain, is ready to come too. You must know better than I do if you can trust him as mate.’

‘Oh, you most managing of women! And is this then your little scheme?’

‘Yes, it is; and I’m rather pleased with it. Duty bids me urge the prosecution of the voyage. Affection determines me to “go where thou goest.” And kindly feelings and self-interest make me wish to take these two nice Americans with us. You see,’ she added, ‘I am quite frank in my small scheming.’

‘I like your plans,’ I answered, enthusiastically. ‘May these things be! But suppose that the Langstaffs choose to go home? What then?’

‘In that case,’ replied my dear, blushing a little as she spoke, ‘we must do two things. You must find a clergyman and I a *mate*.’

I shall not set forth in writing what answer I gave to this speech.

‘Dick,’ said Hester, presently, looking up, ‘I hope you will not think me unmaidenly, but I am so

alone. And you are my all. I cannot part with you. No, not for a thousand Mrs. Grundys. I very much wish not to marry till we get back to Australia, but, if the Langstaffs cannot come, then you must accept a certain alternative with fortitude; for I don't intend to be left alone here when I see a way, even if an unusual one, out of the dilemma.'

'I am afraid, my dear heart,' I answered, 'that I'll not be too pressing with young Langstaff to come with me as mate if you really mean that his refusal commits me to the "alternative" forced on us.'

Hester laughed and exclaimed:

'No, no, Dick! You must play fair!'

'Well, well,' I replied, 'I'll try and behave honestly, but you put a premium on double-dealing.'

'All in good time" answered my sweetheart; 'haven't we heaps to do before settling into placid matrimony? I am not greedy, but I wish to see you in the way of erecting that statue to Lord Bacon about which we once talked. So we must find and work my poor father's island. Remember that we are partners in the venture!'

'I am quite content, Hess,' I said, 'but you flash a golden hope suddenly before my eyes and then as suddenly extinguish it; like unto the blotting out of the sun. No wonder I am dazzled.'

I held her hand. Her face was half turned from me. I could note the clear brown skin (for she was rather darkened by exposure) and the soft fringe of curved eyelashes. Her lips were slightly parted as if to speak, a sweet half hesitancy expressed on their full outlines.

‘Dick,’ Hester murmured, ‘you will think me a very woman in what I am going to say. But I wish with all my heart to be married in St. James’s Church in Sydney. You know the dear old church; we went there together on the Sunday before we sailed.’

‘I know it well,’ I answered; ‘the Westminster Abbey of the colony. I have gone there many times when I was a boy, coming voyages out to Sydney. I used to read the tablets on the walls, and weave all sorts of stories of the life in the old Colonial days. And I peopled the quaint, stiff-backed pews with old-world figures—Macquarie and Darling—early pioneers, and all the sturdy vanished life which has made England great at the ends of the earth.’

‘Good!’ said Hester, ‘I, too, have built a hundred fancies, grave and gay, about the long-dead people whose lives are commemorated in those dull old walls. The church attracts me strongly, and it is in it that I wish to marry you, sweetheart.’

‘So be it,’ said I thankfully; ‘now let us be off to the schooner.’

Hester went into the house to find Miss Langstaff, and I lit a cigarette and mingled its blue smoke with a glowing cloudland of happy imagery.

Presently I heard voices and footsteps coming round the end of the verandah on which I sat, and soon the two girls appeared. Both perfect types of womanly beauty in their own different ways. Of Hester’s I have written already; nor could I now write dispassionately of her, or her good looks.

Hester had shared her wardrobe with the companion who had so strangely been thrown on her hospitality. They were both dressed in white, in a soft kind of muslin much affected by Hess, the clinging lightness of which the better expressed the outlines of their lithe figures. Both wore Honolulu hats, with wide brims. That of the American girl had a bright circle of scarlet flowers, which made a happy contrast to Hester Leigh's soft band, gay with the yellow feathers of the o-o bird.

In old days the use of this bird's feathers was only permitted to those of royal blood in the Sandwich Islands. I thought that out of the ashes of their volcanoes two princesses of a fairer race had arisen to gladden the hearts and eyes of white men from other far distant lands.

The girls were nearly of the same height, but the American was slighter and looked taller. She possessed soft expressive eyes, which perhaps looked larger than they really were, for her face still bore traces of privation and sorrow. It was somewhat thin and pale, and only coloured when lit up with animation.

Her hair was dark, of a rich shining hue, as were also her eyebrows and eyelashes. I could not help thinking what a noble contrast the two girls were to each other. I thought of Scott's 'Pirate,' and mentally I christened them 'Minna and Brenda.'

Miss Langstaff's blue-black hair was parted in the middle, and fell in soft rippling lines over either brow, with sometimes a stray curl in the centre, which deepened the darkness of her soft violet eyes.

Her skin was a clear white, with a promise of returning colour whenever she smiled or spoke. Her tall willowy figure had a natural grace in every movement. In truth, to see them together suggested the thought that a more striking picture of the diverse beauty of our race, wherever born, would indeed have been difficult to find.

Youth and a good constitution would, no doubt, soon bring back roses to Miss Langstaff's cheeks, and Hester's sisterly kindness and affection had done much to soften her bereavement. Indeed, to both of them, the strange novelty of their position, their physical trials, and the necessity of "being brave," had been the blessings in disguise whereby their sorrow and loss had been mitigated and more easily borne.

We started for the landing-place, and had not gone very far when whom should we meet but no less a personage than His Excellency the Admiral.

Hester had met him in Sydney, in fact he had been a shipmate of her father's nearly thirty years ago. I knew him already, as I had given him an official account of our voyage and our doings at Pandora Island. He stopped and spoke.

'Where are you young people going?' was his greeting.

'On board our schooner, sir,' I replied.

'Oh, on board the schooner, eh! What are your plans, Miss Leigh? I hear you are staying with the Peeks just now,' said the Admiral, as he looked admiringly at the two girls.

'Yes,' replied Hester, 'Mrs. Peek was kind enough

to ask us. We are going on with the voyage, if Mr. Blackburne can ship a crew and get a few stores and repairs done.'

'Indeed,' said His Excellency, 'and are you going too?'

With the corner of my eye I could see the colour deepen in Hester's face, but she looked, nevertheless, quite collected as she answered the question in the affirmative.

I saw the Admiral's brown wrinkled face pucker up yet more as a kindly smile crept over his face.

'Well! well! my dear!' said he at last. 'I daresay you are quite right.'

Suddenly a thought seemed to strike him, and he continued: 'Will you three young people, and your brother, Miss Langstaff,' bowing slightly to the American girl, 'give me the pleasure of your company at dinner to-night at seven, on the flagship? I wish, Miss Leigh, to have a little business talk with Mr. Blackburne and you.'

Miss Langstaff excused herself and her brother, but Hester and I accepted; and Hester added that as she was staying with Mrs. Peek she must ask that lady.

'Oh,' said Admiral Carey, 'I am just on my way to call on her, and as I wish particularly to talk business to you both, I will take it on me to answer for her, and, if possible, to get her to come too. I shall send my barge for you at six forty-five.'

He then said good-bye, and we three continued our walk to the landing-slip.

On board the schooner we found Christopher Lang-

staff hard at work, and looking much better in health.

He came below with us, and we four sat solemnly round the little cabin table, while Hester told Alf to get afternoon tea ready.

‘Langstaff,’ I said, ‘we have just come from settling whether to hang about these islands seeking a freight, and then return to Sydney, or to complete the original plan of the voyage and sail for the guano island. We have decided on the latter plan, contingent on our finding a mate and a crew.’

‘I have not before asked you what your plans were, but I took it that you would probably come to Sydney with us. Now, however, we won’t go there for some time. You have been in fore-and-afters. What do you say? Will you come the round trip with us as mate?’

‘What do you say, Dorothy?’ asked the young man, as he looked at his handsome sister. ‘And where do you come in?’

‘Oh! I come in right here,’ replied his sister, ‘for I believe I originated Mr. Blackburne’s proposition. (Oh, Hess, what a fraud you must have been!) You know, Chris, I don’t want to go back to Portland for some time. I am ready to stay away quite awhile yet, and—and—well, what’s the use of giving reasons? I want to go to the island with our friends, and that’s the end of it.’

‘All right, Sis!’ replied her brother, after hanging in the wind for a minute. ‘But what about our folks at home?’

‘I think, dear,’ said she, ‘that both father and mother will be satisfied when I write fully about the matter. Even if I went to ‘Frisco by the *Mariposa* I could not go East right away. They understand that. Therefore I might as well be here as in California. We’ll write by next mail, and they will hear everything at once.’

To make a long story short, Langstaff agreed to come as mate. His sister was to accompany us as Hester’s guest. It was an arrangement which none of us had cause to regret.

Young Langstaff soon got quite well. He was a fine seaman, a good navigator, and a well-bred gentlemanly fellow. He was, too, a man who could look after himself and enforce discipline, but anything more unlike the ‘Bucko Mate’ of Yankee ships, who keeps his crew more or less terrorised by boot or knuckle-duster, could hardly be imagined.

Talking of ‘Bucko mates,’ I remember, when a lad, playing a football match at Port Adelaide in which the players were all officers or apprentices of sailing ships then in port. The Yankees turned up in half Wellingtons, or sea boots, and didn’t they wade-in in a scrimmage!

I bear the marks on my shins to this day of a hack I got from the gigantic mate of a smart Yankee barque. After the play was over, or had been stopped by the police—I forget which—this pirate came up and clapped me on the back—

‘Say, kiddie, did I kick you some?’ asked the Bucko ruffian, whose heart, perhaps after all, was as big as his fist or his boot.

I looked at him with evil in my eye, for the carnage had been great, and at least two broken limbs had resulted among the players.

‘Yes, I should think you did! I’ve got no skin left,’ I answered.

‘Well, sonny,’ said he, ‘you come along o’ me. The old man’s ashore, and you kin have a square feed on aour packet. I know you damned “lime-juicers” have nothing fit to eat. Come and see if good crackers and maple syrup will help grow new leather.’

I went, and forgot my resentment against his boots in the enjoyment of a capital meal. But to return to the *Pandora* and Miss Langstaff. I described her good looks a little while ago; well, her heart and mind matched them. She and Hester drifted soon into a fast friendship, which weeks of ocean voyaging only deepened.

Finally, as I shall tell you, the coming of the Americans with us was ultimately the means of bringing a good deal of pecuniary compensation to the owners of the *Marion C. Colborne* for the loss of their vessel.

Thus, on the same day on which we decided to seek the island, was the difficulty of a mate overcome, and Hester enabled to continue her voyage in the schooner, as the two girls agreed to chaperon each other, I being thereby made supremely happy in the thought that there need be no separation from my dearest.

No doubt Mrs. Grundy would be shocked. But, as Miss Langstaff cheerfully suggested, ‘that lady

fell overboard as soon as a vessel crossed the Equator going south, so we needn't worry too much over the opinions of persons deceased.'

The difficulty of getting a crew alone remained.

The advent of tea and the boy put an end to serious talk. Alf Nash was evidently suffering from conversational starvation. Miss Langstaff, who, one could see, possessed no small share of the quickness and humour of the American, found him as entertaining as Hester did. And, as time went on, I often discovered her drawing out the little rogue, who presently became her absolute slave as much as he had long been Hester's.

After the tea had been poured out and handed round, Alf took his place on the bottom rung of the companion steps, standing with all the gravity of a footman. But his grotesque appearance gave an indescribably funny aspect to his attitude.

'Alf! How have you been getting along since we went ashore?' asked Hester.

'Very ordinary, Miss. Very ordinary. Feels kind of 'omesick, I does,' said he.

'Homesick, Alf,' said Miss Langstaff, 'for what?'

'I doesn't rightly know meself, lydy. Per'aps it's for my mother and my 'appy 'ome; per'aps it ain't. I feels dull somehow, since the wessel got in here. That 'ipped and derpressed, as I 'ears a bloke say when he lost his mother-in-law.'

'Your mother is alive, Alf, isn't she?' asked Miss Langstaff.

'Yus, miss, she are,' replied Alf.

'I hope you are always kind to her,' continued his fair catechist.

'Suttinly I am. Ketch me turning dorg on 'er. My oath, she's been real good to me. Orfen took a lickin' from the old man to save my bloomin' 'ide. I tells 'er one d'y that she wur always in the 'ight of fashion. "'Ow's that?" says she. "Why, mother," I says, "you're in 'arf mournin'."

'The fact was the old man 'ad bunged hup 'er right eye proper the night before.

'She larfs. But it wur only on one side o' 'er mouth. A 'arf larf, I colls it. Yus, miss, I'll be kind to 'er—I'll graft for 'er all right.'

'Did you ever think of marrying, Nash?' I questioned, for the boy amused me greatly, not so much for what he said, but the look, the manner, and the unreproducible accent gave his simplest speech a drollness which was often not in keeping with his conversation. Also, his views of life, I assure you, not seldom contained sad home truths gleaned from the field of a hard experience.

Alf looked at me, and lifted his left eyelid with his left thumb, and disclosed a dark, beady, merry eye, which gazed out on a world which no doubt had treated him hardly enough at times. He squinted a little, and the action and his expression were indescribably comical.

'Not immediately, sir,' he replied, after a moment's thought, 'I won't go for to say that I've sworn horf it altogether. For hinstance, if the only darter of a Hamerican millyenair insisted, I might 'ave to look into the matter.'

'Wouldn't you like to have a home of your own to go to?' asked Hester.

‘Well, I dunno,’ said the boy. ‘There’s ’omes and ’omes, ye see! I dursay it’s all right among the torfs. But when there’s only two rooms, and ten kids, mostly twins, lydy, it ain’t allus too easy to keep the peace. Specially come Saturday night, and a skin full o’ booze! Now, in our street, I thinks ’usbands and wives seems to like each other best arter one of ’em’s gone.’

‘Gone!’ interrupted Miss Langstaff; ‘what do you mean by that?’

‘Croaked, jugged,* or cleared hout, whichever you likes, Miss. W’y, among our push a funeral is a reg’lar fust class ’oliday for the neighbours. And an inquitch! My oath, lydy, it’s a real treat.’ Alf paused, and then continued:

‘This will tell yer ’ow some wimmin takes their ’usbands croakin’.

‘One night I goes hup to the ’orspital to see a cove I knowed. Come from Cobar, ’e did. ’E was dyin’; and the ’ouse-doctor sends a wire that mornin’ up country to ’is missus tellin’ her so, and expectin’ ’er to start down. My oath! Think she come? Not much! But the cove ’isself gets a wire from ’er:—

“If you die, be sure you are buried by the Hodd-fellows!”

I seen the telegraft meself. That’ll tell yer now! No!’ added Alf emphatically, ‘I aint in a ’urry to keep another man’s darter. It’s ’ard enough to keep meself. I don’t want no donah just at present.’

Such, then, were the sentiments of Alf Nash on the institution of marriage. From his point of view

* Imprisoned.

of life I suspect there was ample justification for their pessimistic character.

‘Good gracious!’ said Hester, looking at the clock, ‘do you see what time it is? I must fly to prepare for the feast! I shall not clothe myself in shining apparel. But I certainly cannot go as I am, and the change takes time. Please put us ashore.’

CHAPTER XX

THE ADMIRAL'S DINNER AND HIS OFFER TO US

THE dinner on board the flagship was a very quiet one. Mrs. Peek and her husband, the Admiral, a lieutenant, a globe-trotting member of Parliament, and his daughter, with Hester and myself, made up the party.

After dinner the others went on deck, our host saying, 'I wish to talk business to these two young people. We shall join you presently.'

We went into another cabin, and the Admiral, producing a chart of the Pacific Ocean, said, 'Show me the position of your Guano Island.'

I bent over the table and pointed to the spot of ocean. The Admiral marked it with a pencil. He then pricked off the distance from a certain meridian, and reflectively tapped his chin with the dividers.

'What steps did your father take, Miss Leigh, to secure this island for his own use and benefit?' he next asked.

'I cannot tell you exactly,' replied Hester. 'But

I know he was well advised legally, and that whatever formalities were necessary, he complied with them, both as regards the Government of New South Wales and the Imperial authorities.'

'That is well,' was the reply. 'For annexing islands privately is ticklish work so far as fixity of tenure goes. I don't suppose the Torrens Act applies to that side of the Pacific.' He chuckled, but Hester didn't understand what he meant. I had been long enough in the colonies to know what an excellent hold a 'Torrens Title' gives. Thus I dropped to his meaning at once.

The Admiral remained silent for a few moments and then continued:—

'According to the position you lay it down in, your island lies without the limits of my Station. But under the circumstances I think I shall not exceed my duty if I act as if it were within the boundaries of the Australian command. I have therefore an offer to make to you.

'Your island,' he went on to say, whilst we wondered what was coming, 'is, you tell me, an uncharted one; indeed, I see and know that it is so. Therefore, the sooner its position is known and laid down with certainty the better.

'Suppose I make use of your vessel, and send an officer with you to fix its latitude and longitude and make a rough survey. You want a crew. I'll let you keep the four men you borrowed from the *Albatross* and you can ship a couple of Kanakas here, if you wish. What do you say to my plan? Can you take the survey party? And on what terms?'

Hester and I looked at each other. The difficulty of a crew would be more than half solved by this arrangement.

‘I’ll accept your offer at once, sir,’ I replied; ‘and I am glad to do so. I will take it partly as a command if I may.’

‘Yes,’ said Hester, ‘if my father were here I know that he would like your kind offer. And as for terms—why! Dick!’ she broke off, ‘we don’t want any terms! Do we? If you give us the use of your sailors, your Excellency, we will gladly pay them. And we will be delighted to take your officer as our guest.’

The Admiral laughed as he answered—

‘You are evidently green hands at Government transport work. It’s quite refreshing to do business in this fashion. I must, however, have some sort of an agreement drawn up. But its basis shall be that I give you a crew to work your schooner in return for their passage and the service rendered to Her Majesty’s Government. I’ll either leave you the four men you got at Pandora Island, or give you others equally good and accustomed to fore-and-aft craft. A lieutenant will go down with you of course. How will that suit you?’

‘Excellently, sir,’ I said. ‘There is only one other matter. If I can, I intend to fill the schooner up with guano as a sample cargo and perhaps put up some staging for working the deposit.’

‘I quite see what you mean,’ agreed the Admiral. ‘The men shall be told that they will have to work cargo.’

‘Thanks!’ I replied. ‘We are perfectly willing to give the current wages to the blue jackets in addition to what the Imperial Government wages may be.’

‘Good heavens!’ said His Excellency, ‘if that offer gets about I’ll have the fleet unmanned in the rush for a gilded trip of this sort. You may do as you see fit about any extra payment, but I require none. And it must be a purely voluntary act of generosity on your part. I therefore make no such stipulation. You people are doing the Government as good a turn as the Government is doing you. My secretary shall draw up the agreement to-morrow.’

‘By-the-by,’ he added as we thanked him, ‘I spent three months in the Chincha Islands when I was a midshipman, and I know something about guano. I’m going to lend you a kind of drill (Wentworth, who will go with you, knows all about its working) used in finding the depths of soft strata. By its use you will be able to gauge how horribly rich you are going to become. Now come on deck and I’ll introduce your future shipmate to you.’

As we left the cabin he said, ‘His name is Wentworth. He has been surveying for the last few years, and is a capital officer and a man both of you will like. I envy him his luck. The rogue! A yachting voyage, and two charming girls to talk to.’

He gave Hester a kindly little pat and added with a sigh:

‘Ah, dear me! what would one not give to put the clock back five-and-twenty years?’

We went on deck, and the Admiral, calling the ruddy-faced officer who had been our fellow-guest at dinner, said to him:

‘Wentworth, I have a little surprise for you. I have asked Miss Leigh and Mr. Blackburne to take you with them to fix the position and make a rough survey of an uncharted island which is their property, and of which they are going to take possession.’

The lieutenant certainly looked astonished. But he replied promptly :

‘Very good, sir ! When do you wish me to be ready ?’

‘In a day or two, I think. You will get your instructions to-morrow.’

Several officers had joined the others, and the conversation became general. We discussed Cronje’s surrender, and the relief of Ladysmith and Mafeking, all happy news to us whom the silence and isolation of the ocean had shut in for several months. On board a man-of-war distance from home vanishes. It is a bit of Old England wherever the ship may be. Presently the band began to play a well-known air, and Mr. Upton, a strangely intelligent man for a member of Parliament, aptly quoted Kipling :

You may take hold on the wings of the morning,
And flop round the world till you’re dead ;
But you can’t get away from the tunes that they play
To the blooming old rag overhead.

The conversation naturally was on little else than South African affairs. I was deeply interested, for I had once spent several months at the front during one of our little wars, and knew something of the country, and a little about the Boers.

Everyone seemed to think pretty much alike on the

subject, and especially, that brave as our army was, it needed a lot of reformation and reorganisation, and I thoroughly agreed with what the captain of one of the cruisers said :

‘ A naval war will find out our weak spots, and there will be lots of them. But they won’t be of the same kind which mildew the army.

‘ The British soldier, whether he be a “ Tommy ” or an officer, isn’t caught as young as we sailors are. He isn’t trained in the same practical way. Our people are learning how to fight from the Boers, and to unlearn a lot of obsolete foolishness. But, Heavens, how we have had to pay for the education ! ’

‘ Yes,’ said Wentworth, ‘ if we in the Navy, or you people in the Merchant Service, hit anything harder than salt water, there’s a court martial or an inquiry, and somebody gets in the soup. But one reads of all sorts of mistakes in this war, and never hears who’s to blame. It’s “ a regrettable incident,” and there’s the end of it.’

‘ You will see,’ said the member of Parliament, ‘ that there will be a searching inquiry when the show is finished. It’s no use saying too much just now, and making too many changes. “ Swapping horses when you’re crossing a creek ” isn’t a very good plan.’

‘ Oh,’ remarked his daughter, ‘ you politicians always say what fine improving things you will do. But you know, father, that nothing ever is done. We British always begin everything by making a mess.’

‘ Heaven knows,’ replied her father, ‘ we have made plenty of messes in South Africa, not only

military but political. The only consolation I can give myself is that the French or Germans would probably have done just as badly. It's no joke to move an army there. And think, too, of the unpaid army of spies which the unfriendly population of Dutch are, even within the Cape Colony itself. I know them well.'

'Do you?' I asked. 'I suppose, then, that you must have lived among them.'

'I lived six years in South Africa—the Cape, Transvaal, and Bechuanaland. I know, therefore, something of the Boer character, both for good and evil. The thing which worries me more than anything else is an incident like Cronje's surrender. It was, I think, most unnecessary to treat a man with the record of Cronje with the stately courtesy which would be the just due of some chivalrous foe. Such consideration is thrown away and misunderstood. Leniency, just now, is construed by the Boers into weakness. You will see it will only prolong the war.'

When you hear sentiments exactly your own coming from someone else, you easily regard the speaker as a person of superior discernment. Such was my attitude towards this politician.

From the Imperial soldier and his deficiencies the conversation drifted into the defence of Australia. I listened to the various views, especially when Mr. Peek, who was an Australian, gave his opinion.

'Yes,' he said to the Admiral, 'I don't believe in universal disarmament. We're not holy enough for that yet in this world. War is a good moral tonic for everyone; it teaches that best form of public

unselfishness, the virtue of patriotism. I don't want to see us become a nation of land-grabbing filibusters, but I rejoice in what the colonies are doing for the Empire. We have been too comfortable in Australia; our success has come too easy; we are too fond of pleasure, too materialistic; we require the chastening hand of war and trouble at our doors. I don't want to see a standing army. But I want to see every young colonial taught to ride and shoot, and to undergo a certain amount of common sense training. Let us be as able to defend ourselves as the Boers are; we can do so without damaging a lad's civil career or making him think of nothing but military schemes.'

'Ay,' said the Admiral, 'and I hope you are not going to forget, Mr. Peek, that you have a seaboard to defend. I wish I heard more of Australian boys going to sea. I don't believe in the whole of the Australian Squadron you will find thirty Australian-born men. I wish I could see a way to alter this. The adventurous spirit of colonial boys does not seem to find an outlet in seafaring. I wish to goodness it did! However, I am hopeful that this business in South Africa will make a change, and that some sort of military and naval training will be originated from the British people themselves rather than from any act of forced legislation.'

It was now getting late, and Mrs. Peek rose to go. The boat put me on board the *Pandora*, while the others landed at the slip. I smoked a pipe with Langstaff while we listened to the erratic singing of some slightly sober individuals on board a schooner moored near us. We then turned in.

The following morning I set about the preparations for our departure. The cabins were cleaned out and repainted, and I saw to the accommodation required for Miss Langstaff, her brother, and Lieutenant Wentworth. The fore-castle was also made glorious with fresh paint and a couple of ventilators.

I shipped two Kanakas, both good sailormen, on the understanding that if I wished, they were to remain on the island until ships arrived to load guano.

Christopher Langstaff was, I found, a smart hand, who, like many Down-East sailors, seemed to me to be as good with an adze as with a marline-spike. During the next few days our preparations went on with unabated vigour. Hester paid a mysterious visit on board to make ready for 'people coming to stay,' as she put it. She was accompanied by a young person from a large store in the town, bearing various burdens. I never saw a woman so full of hostess-like anxiety to make her guests comfortable. Dorothy Langstaff was to share the starboard after-cabin with her. This room required very little alteration, as it was already fitted with two berths. Still, Hester contrived to give a few new touches to it, so that the American girl, when she came on board, would find that something fresh had been added for her comfort. When Miss Leigh had finished with her room she went into mine.

'Are you ready to carry your things from here to your new cabin?' she asked.

'What for?' I asked, a little astonished. 'Alf cleared everything out two days ago, and it is newly painted as you see.'

‘But you,’ said Hester, ‘are going into my father’s room, aren’t you? Of course you are—I don’t wish anyone else to occupy it.’

She looked so set on this arrangement, and I knew well that she wanted no stranger to live in a room where her father had lived, that I didn’t like refusing her. Still, I thought that Wentworth should have it.

‘Look here, Hess,’ I said at last. ‘It’s this way. This man is our guest. Besides which he must have some place where he can do his chart work. He will be certain to bring some gear with him: a couple of chronometers, an artificial horizon, a theodolite, and so forth—and we must stow them somewhere. There’s no room in here. If I take the after cabin he’ll think he’s intruding every time he comes in to work. No, no, we’ll put his chronometers alongside of ours and give him the after room.’

‘Well, Dick,’ she agreed, ‘I suppose I must obey you. But I didn’t wish him to have it. Anyway I’ll fix up yours. Away you go on deck! and don’t come back till I give you leave.’

When I did return I went into all the cabins, and Hess took me round to see her handiwork. The rooms looked marvellously cosy. Art serge pockets on the walls of each, new curtains in my room and in young Langstaff’s, a tidy little drop-table in each, and one or two bookcases; and even a rack for the girls’ violins and Wentworth’s banjo.

‘Have I done well?’ she inquired, looking expectantly at me. ‘Now praise me, dear—for I really love looking at the rooms myself. Do you think they will like them? I do so want to make them comfortable.’

‘You have done wonderfully well, dearest,’ I replied, ‘and if they are not pleased, they deserve to be made to listen to a parliamentary debate as a penance for their sin. Now I must be off to work again.’

‘So must I,’ replied Hess. ‘Mrs. Peek is waiting for me in the big German store. Send Alf to scull me ashore.’

The following morning Lieutenant Wentworth came on board.

He was a merry, pleasant-faced sailor, with a tanned complexion and lots of thick chestnut hair. Imagine ‘Bubbles’ grown up, and you have his appearance in a word.

He came to talk over various matters with me, and I found him a business-like fellow. He brought all his traps with him, and I showed him his room.

‘But am I “jumping your claim?”’ he said, ‘for, if so, I shall be most unhappy. Any berth will do for me—and not this boudoir.’

‘It’s all right,’ I answered, ‘Miss Leigh and I wish you to have this berth. You would have to stow your gear somewhere, and this is the best place. So here you shall stop.’

‘Well, I do it under protest—and I must make my peace with Miss Leigh afterwards, for I’m sure she must dislike a stranger having her father’s cabin.’

I left him to arrange his things. Later on he came on deck, and we had a yarn together on various subjects. ‘I think we’ll be a happy party,’ I finally said.

‘I’m very sure of it,’ replied he, heartily, as he went over the side.

‘By the way,’ I sang out, ‘you might call at Mrs. Peek’s and tell Miss Leigh that I cannot leave the vessel to-night; there is too much to do. You might also bring the two ladies off to-morrow about ten. I expect we shall sail at noon.’

I saw him look surprised when I said ‘two ladies,’ but his boat was now out of speaking distance, so nothing further was said.

Our four sailors and the two Kanakas were on board, and had settled themselves once more in the little forecastle. A fine handy whaleboat was sent by the Admiral to be used during the survey. We, therefore, had now three boats altogether.

That evening I finished a very full account of our strange voyage, and of our plans for the future, which I intended mailing to Mr. Rawlinson, Captain Leigh’s agent in Sydney, of whom I have already spoken. To this Hester added a further letter to his wife, telling her of our engagement.

The Langstaffs had also written fully to their people.

All was now ready, and I sent a note to the Admiral, saying that we wished to sail on the following day.

CHAPTER XXI

WE SAIL FOR LEIGH ISLAND

MORNING came and about ten o'clock I saw a man-of-war's boat leaving the landing place. She was quickly alongside the *Pandora*. Mrs. Peek and her husband were with the two girls. They had come to see us sail. Humphrey Wentworth was also in the boat.

I had almost forgotten two other passengers—cats which Hester had brought. One was a very good Persian, the other a less aristocratic animal. I do not know that they 'earned their tucker,' for we had made a pretty clean sweep of all the rodents in the ship; but it contented us to think we were armed with an additional safeguard against rats, if any had escaped destruction.

The ladies went below, and from the delighted exclamations which came up the open companion I judged that Hester was showing her guests the changes in the cabins, and that they were approved of.

Hester has less vanity than any woman I know, and more justification for it, in my opinion; nevertheless, she has a little. And I now knew the point of

glorification on which she was absolutely pleased with herself. I chaffed her upon it that very evening when we got clear of the land. Her reply was, like herself, frank and honest.

‘I acknowledge,’ she said, ‘that I am conceited about the matter. I know I can make a room look pretty. If I was penniless to-morrow, I’m certain I could earn my living at dressing either shop windows or silly women.’

But to return to the schooner. The wind was fair, and we needed no help in getting out of the harbour. I confess, too, that I was anxious to show the critical eyes of the fleet how smartly we could get under weigh.

The good-byes were spoken; Hester kissed Mrs. Peek and thanked her for all her motherly kindness. And I also told her how grateful I was for her hospitality.

‘Yes, and see you deserve the girl you have won. You are the luckiest of men,’ said the old lady as she concluded some kindly admonitions to me.

As our visitors descended the side, calling out their last good-byes, I sang out to ‘man the windlass.’

In the Royal Navy they do not sing when on heavy work; but in our little ship both Langstaff and Martin were past masters in the knowledge of ‘chanties;’ nor were the Kanakas ignorant of this music. The harbour, therefore, soon re-echoed to the sounds of one of the best of all sailors’ songs—‘Shenandoah.’ The blue jackets quickly joined in the refrain as if they had been accustomed to get their anchor by it all their lives. Out across the little port broke the

sound of their singing as link by link the chain came in—

Oh, Shenandor ! I love your daughter,
A'way you rolling river.

Oh, Shenandor ! I long to hear you
Across the wild Missouri.

Oh, Shenandor ! I'll ne'er forget you,
A'way you rolling river.
Till the day I die I'll love you ever,
Across the wild Missouri.

And so on, verse after verse, repeated till we were under weigh.

The words of these songs may often be poor stuff, or even actually silly ; but sung on a ship's forecastle, or when the drenched watch are tailing on to a halliard up to their waists in water, they seem to me to be full of meaning. The hidden language of the sea keeps calling in every hoarse chorus and quaint reiteration. I declare I never listen to these songs without my heart stirring. It seems only yesterday since I heard one for the first time on a certain day in February. It was 'Rio Grande,' and we were getting our anchor outward bound on a long voyage:—

Then fare ye well, my bonny fair maid,
We are bound to the Rio Grande.

The wild despairing note of the hoarse voices, the click of the pawls, the clank of the chain, and the thunderous flap of loosened canvas away aloft in the obscurity of a winter's morning in the Downs, made up a memory which never loses its vividness or its pathos ; at least is this the case with anyone who knows the inner life of the sailing ship with its curious

interests, its strange monotony, its unrecorded hardships. And the hopeless outlook in the lives of the homely bent figures who 'man these shuttles of an Empire's loom,' and, unrewarded and neglected, so largely help to weave the fabric of our national greatness, lends an added emphasis to the scene.

Canvas was soon upon the schooner, and dipping our ensign we quickly got outside the harbour—thus for the third time making a start to reach our original objective.

Langstaff and I picked the watches. When we had finished Wentworth came up to me.

'Look here, Blackburne,' said he, 'I am no fonder of keeping a lookout than other people, and I've had a good dose of it lately, for I've been in schooners over three years right on end. But I don't want to be an idler while you and Langstaff work. Suppose you let me stand a watch? You're skipper, and you can turn in all night.'

'It's awfully good of you,' I answered, 'to make so kind an offer. But I could not dream of accepting it. We look on you as our guest, and guests don't do the housework, dear boy.'

He looked positively disappointed, and I saw he was in earnest.

'Well,' he said, 'suppose you make three watches of officers and let me stand one of them.'

'Good,' I replied; 'if you really wish it, I'll agree. But it's not fair getting you to do duty.'

'Not at all,' he replied. 'I wish to be of use. The arrangement will give us all more leisure and make the passage a pleasant one.'

The matter was therefore arranged in the above fashion.

I don't remember a happier little party than that which met at our evening meal the first night out. The table had the glory of the land upon it, tropical flowers and fruits, arranged by the two girls, till Alf gasped in admiration.

'A Town 'All Banguitch ain't in it along o' this set out,' he exclaimed.

After tea we went on deck. Hester and I went forward and leant against the rail opposite the main rigging. We were tired with the events and excitements of the day, and remained silent and—happy, while the surpassing beauty of the sunset held us tongue-tied.

'God's bright and intricate device' of times and seasons, as Stevenson finely says, glorifies the homeliest landscape, and equally so the beginning and ending of a day at sea are full of beauty. I never weary of their manifold wonders.

It is at these times that one beholds a new heaven and a new earth. The cares and labours which fill the day are either not yet or, in the dog-watch, are forgotten for a little.

I think early recollections last most strongly—I know, in my case, they do. All the physical wonders and sights of the sea which last as mental pictures are those impressed on my brain in the earlier part of my career.

I carry in my memory as one of these first recollections of my sea life the deep impression made by the glory of a certain sunset. Such a sunset as Hester

and I were then gazing upon. My ship was in the North-east Trades, and they were light and the day had been hot. I had been engaged in blacking down the chain topsail sheets with coal tar, and a liberal application of slush (salt dripping) had got me clean in a blistered piebald sort of way.

I went out on the jibboom and was trying to catch fish and failing to do so.

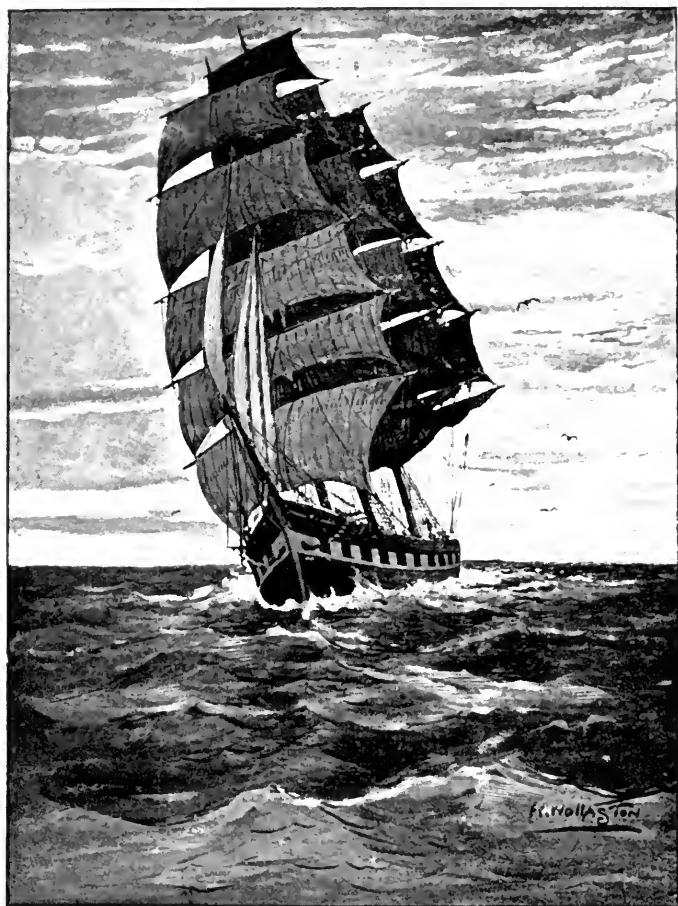
The carpenter, an intelligent but uneducated man, came out after me to suggest improvements in my methods of fishing.

The azure concave dome above us was still glorious with moving islands of white cloud. Away down towards the western horizon these white clouds had taken on half a dozen marvellous shades of delicate pink, while here and there, close to the now rapidly sinking sun, their edging was a broad band of resplendent gold.

The day had lost the fervour of its earlier hours, a cool breeze blew, and the swish of parted water made our airy swaying perch resonant with pleasant sounds. Over us were the arched jibs, yearning as if towards some invisible beckoning hand.

Behind us came the noble ship, heeling and bowing with stately slowness—her sails like carven marble, asleep from lofty skysail down to the ample bosoms of the courses.

The great glowing sun was already on the sea-rim; swiftly it dipped, and with its disappearance the royal edging of the clouds took paler tints; the deep colour of the blue vault above us became a more delicate hue, and in the East we could see a large low planet



BEHIND US CAME THE NOBLE SHIP

beginning to show out of the gathering darkness. Night had begun upon the ocean.

Just as Hester and I, on this later evening, stood silent and entranced, so, in that earlier day did this 'vision splendid' impress the carpenter and me.

The silence was at last broken by my companion's voice :

'Ever 'eard of a bloke called Ruskin?' he asked.

'You mean a chap who wrote about pictures?' said I.

'That's the bloke,' said 'Chips.' ' 'E makes me both angry and happy. 'E's a wonder. 'Ow 'e points out the innards o' things! And Lord! 'ow well 'e does it! All such beautiful things as we've been a-lookin' at just now. 'E tells you what to look for—and then, blarst 'im, if 'e 'asn't the damned cheek to talk as if ord'nary common coves like you and me 'adn't enough savvy in us to admire—to happleciate I think 'e calls it—a sight like this here sunset. Curse his imperence!'

This carpenter swore picturesquely, got drunk whenever he could, and did a lot of other things he shouldn't do. But he read Ruskin—and knew many things, even his own trade. Well done, Chips!

But to return to the deck of the *Pandora*.

Our long silence was broken by the sound of eight bells; and Hester said good-night and went below.

It was rather a long journey to the island. If the reader will look at the track-chart it will be seen that we did not go straight from Samoa to our port. In a sailing vessel this would have been impossible. The best—and indeed the only—way was to stand south-

ward after leaving Apia right across the South-East Trades, close-hauled throughout on the port tack. When we got beyond the limit of these winds we looked to pick up westerlies to enable us to run down the easting before we again turned north for the island—this time, of course, on the starboard tack, and in the S.E. Trades once more towards the end of the passage.

As a matter of fact I had to get south between the thirty-fifth and fortieth parallels before I began to make any easting. Indeed even then we were not far enough to pick up good westerlies.

We made rather a slow passage and thus many days passed before we saw Captain Leigh's long-sought island. Still it was a very happy voyage. All hands were contented, and we had on the whole very fine weather. The schooner was hardly ever snugged down. However, one of these few occasions on which we were thus forced to shorten sail might have been most disastrous in its effects. But of that later on.

The naval man and the young American were both excellent seamen, and had a larger experience of fore-and-aft vessels than I possessed. My mind was therefore quite easy in regard to the schooner being well looked after when they were in charge of the deck.

The men forward settled down again very quietly into sea routine. I think I told you that the Admiral allowed the bluejackets lent by the *Albatross* to remain with us. Martin Johnson was a sort of uncrowned king of the forecastle, and the boy and cook the court jesters.

Alf, under the advice of the two girls, had begun to study in his spare time, and could read fairly well and 'do sums.' Miss Langstaff sketched prettily, and did a number of pieces illustrating ship-board life. She drew the boy in several of his characteristic attitudes; and he was more than ever the devoted slave of Hester and the American, to whom the history of his shifty, troubled life was always interesting and often amusing. Miss Langstaff was anxious to know if he had had any kind of rational amusements, so one morning after he had finished his work in the pantry I heard the following conversation:—

'Alf, you seem to have had a lot of very curious experiences.'

'You bet, mam,' replied the boy, 'that I 'ave! Livin' on the game, any'ow, for the most part.'

'I want to know if you had any amusements?'

'Wot's that?'

'Oh, games—cricket, football, or swimming.'

'My oath! Yus, miss, I used ter go swimmin' orfen. But none of them other things—'adn't no time when I was in the ricieg stible. But I was what the orspital doctor called a Paitron of the Dramar—leastways I used ter go to the Tivoli Theayter whenever I 'ad a odd tanner. Tip-top it wur! My word!'

'But had you no out-of-door fun?'

'Well, I dunno 'xactly abaout fun, but I knows a public 'oliday and specially a review wur a good chuck in fur the like o' me.

'The missus,' he continued, 'wus arsking me yes-

terday about findin' lorst dorgs, and I tells her that there wus a little to be done in that line sometimes. Wot with old lydies and their fat poodles a-getting separated, I've several toimes earned a sprat or two for bringin' them together ag'in—restorin' lorst proputtly, ma'am. D'ye understand, lydy?'

And here Alf twitched his eye up and tried to assume an expression of innocence quite refreshing to behold.

'But torking o' lorst dorgs,' he went on, 'minds me o' a queer start I seen one review day in the Centennial Park—that's near Sydney, ma'am. Well, there wus a Scotch regiment dressed in them things like petticoats (savin' yer favour, lydy), I carn't mind o' the nime. Well, it 'ad a band of bagpipes, d'ye see? And the coves wot wus a-blowin' of them wus struttin' in front o' the rest o' the push. Gor blime me, miss, like peacocks wi' two tails! Well, there wur a chap o' the nime o' Mike—a bit ratty, he wur—druv a bottle cart fur a livin'. Struth, lydy! 'E gets 'old of a dead dorg—one properly swollen hup—a reg'lar pisened pup—and wot does 'e do? 'E sticks the tile inter 'is maouth, tucks the dorg's body under 'is arm and works 'is fingers on one of the legs as if it wur a kind of flute. And hoff 'e goes in front o' the regiment a-pretendin' to ply the pipes on the corpse, and a-makin' a dashed queer 'ummin' noise with his maouth.

'Larf!—Gawd luve ye!—it reg'lar fitched daown the 'aouse! I thort me bloomin' ribs was adrift with the shakin' I give them. But the best o' the show was to see the band. My oath, they was properly narked, I tell yer.'

‘Good gracious! What a dreadful sight it must have been! Was anything done to the man?’ said Miss Langstaff, evidently somewhat shocked by this unsavoury tale of the deceased dog.

‘Oh no, miss! I reckons if them piper coves ’ad a right to make a squealin’ in a bag made o’ dead skin without the ’air on, the bottle-cart bloke ’ad a right to make a row with a dead dorg with the ’air on.’

‘But you haven’t told me anything much yet of amusements of a constant kind—a review happens only rarely.’

‘That’s right, miss. But ye see if ye was ’ard hup fur a lark there wus allus a chance to poke borack at the coppers.’

‘To poke borack at the coppers! What in the world is that?’

I was in my room while this talk was going on, and I chucked inwardly as this river of Sydney street slang flowed from the lips of Alf into the horrified but amused ears of the lively American. I judged she was taking it all in for subsequent repetition, even if she did suffer from a little pardonable trepidation as to what the boy might say next.

‘W’y, ’umbugging the bobbies—the perlice I means,’ answered the young larrikin.

‘But that must be a dangerous game, Alf. In my country you have to be very civil indeed to the man in blue, and he, at least in New York, is not often very civil to you.’

‘Well, miss, it ain’t as risky as it oughter be. Our Sydney coppers does put hup with a lot, from bad language to road metal, afore they runs you hin. Decent blokes some of them is, too.’

‘Were you ever “run in,” Alf?’

‘I’ve been run in, miss—as I’ll presently tell yer. But never actooally put in the Big Jug—I means Darlin’urst Jail, in Sydney, lydy—tho’ I’ve bin orful near it.

‘Well, it wur this w’y,’ continued Alf, on being being pressed by his fair hearer: ‘Some o’ the Rocks Push* was a’chiacking a bobby, and ’e got a bit narked and went to cop ’old of a chap of the name of Sullivan, a reg’lar flash cove. They ’as a bit of a barney, an’ things begun to look a bit ugly—fur the Rocks push is a bad crowd when there’s blue metal ’andy and there’s a good mob of ’em together.

‘Well, as luck would ’ave it, there was a man standin’ by waterin’ the street with a big ’ose. Suddint-like a little bloke, who ’ad a runnin’ from ’is ear, sings out:

“Bobby! Yer’ve got no blarsted sense! W’y doesn’t yer blow yer blooming whistle? S’elp me Gawd! I’ll syringe yer ears, same as they does at the ’orspital, an’ give yer a noo set o’ brains!”

‘With that they knocks the water-man endw’ys and lets the copper ’ave the squirt full in the side o’ ’is ’ead. My oath! There was fun fer yer, miss, I tell yer! All the same I gets run in all right! But I gets let orf with a caution—“fust hoffence,” the Beak called it.’

I heard Miss Langstaff’s merry laugh as she went on deck to Lieutenant Wentworth, who, by the way, seemed to take quite a touching interest in the

* A band of larrikins of a certain district in Sydney who at one time gave great trouble to the police.

troubles of the Americans—and not only in their troubles! Humphrey Wentworth was an enthusiast in navigation, and there was a small nautical school going on on board quite often. Hester pointed out with a twinkle in her eye that Miss Langstaff was Mr. Wentworth's especial pupil—'an anxious enquirer after truth,' as an evangelical old lady with whom I once lodged used to say. She had an elderly crony who also kept boarders—medical students, I fancy. She once complained to my landlady of their late hours and rowdy habits. 'Why don't you get them to go and hear Moody and Sankey?' said my landlady.

'Good gracious!' replied her friend, 'they are there every night.'

'Is that possible? And what do they say?'

'That it's the best fun out.'

I told Hester this story and she laughed.

'But I am more interested in the loves of Humphrey and Dorothy just now than the hymns of Moody and Sankey, good as they are.

'Yes,' continued Hester, 'the sea is a most fatal place for young people. They inevitably fall in love or fight. Look at these two innocents! They don't know where they are. How interested I am in them!'

This was said with all the seriousness of a chaperone of sixty.

For myself, I confess I looked after Hester's nautical education to a considerable extent. Indeed, to be honest, young Langstaff informed us all four, one afternoon, that he guessed he would have to begin

teaching Alf Nash spiritual songs—Sankey's hymns for a start—to keep himself from feeling lonesome.'

Hester and I laughed and didn't care; we knew the shot was a deserved one, and when we got on deck all she said was:

'If Mr. Christopher Langstaff, mate of the *Pandora* schooner, doesn't have a *mauvais quart d'heure* at the hands of a certain young lady, then I know nothing about my own sex. And he deserves it too!'

But if these two young people, Wentworth and Miss Langstaff, were in a fair way to fall in love, something now occurred which might easily have finished their budding affection for ever and a day.

CHAPTER XXII

SHOWS THAT IT IS AS EASY TO FALL OVER-BOARD AS TO FALL IN LOVE

OUR passage, as I expected, was not a short one, and if we had been less happily situated from a social point of view, I suspect we would have found it exceedingly wearisome.

As it was, however, none of us suffered from boredom except poor Christopher Langstaff, who, in common with us all, saw well enough how things were going with his sister and Wentworth, and who obviously was placed in a position to 'do gooseberry' chronically.

One afternoon he button-holed Hester and poured forth his woes to her—as indeed everyone does after they have known her a short time.

'Look you, Miss Leigh,' said he, 'I can see that you four people are having a pretty fair time on this packet. But I'm not—I never was so lonesome in my life.

'There's Dorothy,' he continued; 'you heard me saying "I'd teach Alf hymns for something to do." Well, you should have heard what she said to me

afterwards—fur flying everywhere! I wish the “old man”* would give me deck duty all day, and let me turn in all night, and then I’d not feel so much as if I’d been sent to Coventry.’

‘Mr. Langstaff,’ replied Hester, ‘I feel quite ashamed of myself, and you shall not have to complain of being left out in the cold any more.’

‘Well, you’re a brick, Miss Leigh,’ said Langstaff. ‘I’ve got a good nerve, I know, to howl to you as I’ve done. But Dot’s too bossy for me to tackle! And she’s not in a frame of mind to look at things right here in a usual way. *Now, is she?*’

Hester laughed as she said:

‘Well, Mr. Christopher, I am not going to express an opinion, so you needn’t question me. But *I’m* quite normal anyway, am n’t I? You wouldn’t have dared to unbosom yourself to me if you weren’t sure I was. Anyhow I am, so you shan’t be neglected.’

How Hester revelled in a conversation of this kind! I think one of her many charms is, that whilst she is the most level-headed counsellor that ever man had at his elbow, she remains, at the same time, a very woman.

The length of our passage made no difference to the men, as they liked the change from a man of war, and they knew, also, that the trip would not be an unprofitable one to their pockets.

Altogether we were a happy ship.

I shall not weary you with the details of our voyage; it is enough to say that we kept her full and by all the way down to about thirty-five degrees, and

* Sea slang for the Captain.

making our easting, with moderate luck in westerly winds, finally turned up for the last stretch to the assigned position of Leigh Island, as we called it. This brings me to a place not very far to the westward of Easter Island.

It was blowing fresh, and the wind was increasing. We had just finished stowing the topgallantsail, and had hauled down the outer jib and put a reef in the mainsail.

It was exciting sailing, the little craft leaping like a mad thing from wave to wave. There was a large sea, but we were making excellent weather of it. I was in charge of the deck.

Miss Langstaff and Wentworth were in interested talk by the rail near the lee main-rigging.

I could hear snatches of their conversation. He was telling her about the discovery of Easter Island, near which we then were, by Roggewein, on Easter Sunday, 1721. Humphrey Wentworth had a keen sense of the picturesque in sea story, and I could not help listening to his word-painting of the navigator with his curious old high-pooped frigate coming upon this strange isolated spot, with its handsome light-coloured people, and the remnants of a past civilisation, the story of which no man knoweth. Their talk passed on to other things, and every now and then I heard his pleasant English voice alternating with her bright and lively sallies, spoken with the faintest touch of an American accent, which gave zest to her quaint, picturesque sayings.

Miss Langstaff, I would have you know, was as clever, as agile-witted, as even a clever American girl, well bred, and educated in Boston, can be.

She was half sitting on the low rail, with her back out-board, and holding on to a back stay.

I heard Wentworth call her attention to the height of the seas, as they under-ran the vessel, and raced away to leeward like wild horses.

She replied ; and I caught her silvery laugh, and piquant intonation, as she said :

‘Oh ! The Rockies are just good enough for me. I don’t want any mountain scenery on this trip.’

At that moment an unusually great sea rolled up, the vessel pitched heavily, Miss Langstaff lost her hold, and in a breath I saw her tumble backwards, and there, in the white smother by the quarter, for a moment, I saw a hat and a pair of outstretched hands.

Wentworth never hesitated. In a flash he had taken her bearing, and was overboard after her.

Such things happen at sea in a moment, yet you endure hours during their passage. The shouting which ensued on board came from Alf Nash and a Kanaka who was aloft in the main crosstrees.

This South Sea Islander was a smart fellow, and never let his eyes wander from the two heads fighting for their lives in that yeasty waste of troubled sea. As for Alf Nash, I could hear his high-pitched twang yelling :

‘There’s two of ’em in the drink—the noo lydy, and the naivy gent !’

As quick as thought two or three things were flying overboard. I believe I had a life buoy over almost as soon as Wentworth jumped—and, thank God, he got it too—while Alf Nash distinguished himself by flinging over the oilcan he had in his hand. This

turned out an unexpectedly splendid thing, for the contents smoothed a patch of sea, and marked the neighbourhood of the swimmers in a way which was a revelation to me.

The helmsman, of course, saw the whole affair, and even before the words of command left my lips, he had begun to revolve the wheel, and the brave little vessel, with slatting sails and jumping spars, was soon up in the wind.

I let her remain in the same position, with head-sheets over to windward and the tack of the mainsail hauled up, whilst I let go the topsail halliards and hauled in the slack of the weather braces.

Young Langstaff, who was below, had heard the commotion, and with a spring he came on deck and took in the situation in a glance. He was here, there, and everywhere, doing the right thing with wonderful smartness. The double-ended boat, happily swung out-board and on our lee side, was lowered and in the water before the schooner had lost all her way. In a minute more they were pulling for our two ship-mates.

‘By God, sir,’ said Martin, his face working with excitement, ‘it couldn’t ha’ been done smarter in a frigate or a whaler.’

The Kanaka was all this time closely watching the swimmers.

I have gone through some uncommonly unpleasant times at sea, and, as my reader will allow, I had had a fair experience of them during this same voyage, but I do not remember ever feeling the passage of time more terrible than the actually short period of

minutes which elapsed while I stood in the main rigging watching the tops of the waves, and passionately thinking prayers that our friends might be saved from the hungry sea.

Hailing the cross-trees I sang out :

‘ Do you see them ? ’

‘ Yes, sar.’

‘ Is the boat pulling in the right direction ? ’

‘ Yes, sar ! All right ! Misser Langstaff he stan’ up ! He see all right ! ’

This was reassuring. But would they get to the swimmers in time before the ‘ barbarous mishandling ’ of the seas had knocked the breath out of their lungs and water-logged them ? A very few minutes would settle the question.

Hester stood close by me. She watched the waves, silent, colourless, and with ashy lips.

‘ Boat got ’em, sar ! ’ suddenly came in a loud hail from aloft.

‘ Got both ? ’

‘ Yes, sar ! Lady she dragged in ; officer, he try climbing now.’

Then I heard a cheer from the men, and I dropped from the rigging on to the deck.

The boat was not very far away, yet I judged it best to get to leeward of her, and then heave to ; and this I did. I am not too sure that this was the best practice. A light schooner would drift, perhaps, faster than the boat, and it might have been as well to heave to to windward, and drop down on the boat. However, as long as the picking-up vessel makes a lee for the boat, the main point is served. We then

emptied more oil over the side and had an area of smoothness close to the ship. I was surprised for the moment to see the oil spreading itself so quickly away to windward, forgetting that our drift was faster than that of the oil. However, what did spread out to leeward served its turn, and that to windward laid the sea for both schooner and boat. So we did well out of the oil treatment.

The boat was soon alongside, and the boarding was managed with consummate skill. I never saw the thing done better, and I soon had the unspeakable happiness of finding everyone safe on board and the boat hoisted up unharmed.

Miss Langstaff was quite sensible, but utterly prostrate, and I reckoned that she had more salt water inside her than was wholesome. Therefore we promptly handed the case over to Hester to deal with.

Blankets, hot water bottles, and sleep, no doubt, would soon cure her.

As for Wentworth—he *was* tough. Perhaps you could kill him with a meat-axe? I am not sure. He went below, changed his clothes, drank hot coffee and rum, came on deck, and looked none the worse for his ducking.

The girl's brother walked across to him and took his hand. But what young Langstaff said I don't know. However, Wentworth reddened, returned the shake, and looked uncommonly satisfied, whilst I remarked to myself in confidence: 'How pleased some men are to stand well with the brothers of charming girls!'

Hester, who had just run up to find out if Wentworth had had his coffee, saw the little incident, smiled across to me, and we felt like aged people as we saw a new romance developing under our very eyes—‘right here,’ as the Langstaffs would have said.

After tea Langstaff went in to see his sister. I am sure they must have had a pretty affectionate meeting, for when he came out his eyes were filled with tears, and my dear one’s filled in happy sympathy as she witnessed his emotion.

Late on that evening Hester called Lieutenant Wentworth, saying: ‘I have a message for you, Mr. Wentworth. Miss Langstaff wishes to see you! You may go in if you stay five minutes only; I shall time you.’

Wentworth looked delighted as he asked, ‘You are sure I shan’t disturb her?’

‘Oh, of course you’ll disturb her,’ replied Hester, with the faintest ripple of a smile, ‘but counter-irritants are sometimes good in depressed conditions. Anyway I’ll risk the remedy. You may go, sir.’

Wentworth’s face was a study. His thoughts were evidently chaotic. He didn’t quite know how to take Hester’s mischievous raillery. But he was collected enough to take her at her word, and enter the cabin.

When the lieutenant came out he evidently thought he was treading on air, for he stumbled over the Persian cat, and then profusely begged the Tabbie’s pardon. The cat received his apology with such loud lamentations that he was effectually awakened from cloudland.

The incident did not escape Hester's eye. 'These are signs of the times,' said she, with an air of long experience of such things, 'and I hear the sound of wedding bells.'

The swift and tragic ending which two of our party had so narrowly escaped drew us all still closer together. I do believe that there never was a more united party gathered together in a little ship.

It was now quite plain to all of us that Wentworth and Dorothy Langstaff were very much interested in each other, and that her brother looked on with apparent approval. He evidently was quite satisfied about the matter as long as his sister was. What 'Poppa,' far away in Portland, Maine, U.S.A., might say was another matter.

But it seemed to us that though Hester was in a sense Dorothy's chaperone, as well as her hostess, there was no call to interfere. The girl had her brother with her. She was accustomed to the large freedom accorded in America to women, even more than in Australia; and, above all, Wentworth was an honourable gentleman.

I already knew him to be a brave and capable seaman; besides this, he was not without some private means beyond his pay. All things considered, we let matters alone. Dorothy Langstaff might very easily do worse than marry this manly Englishman who had risked his life to save hers.

Hester, of course, was daily on the tip-toe of expectation.

What an unfading interest women seem to take in the love affairs of other people.

But her expectations of a *dénouement* remained long ungratified ; for the announcement of their engagement did not bring satisfaction to her soul till Sydney Heads were within a few days' sail.

This was well ; for people do right to know each other very thoroughly before they take the weighty and solemn step of plighting their troth.

I always think that a too precipitate understanding takes from life one of its few really interesting incidents—the exploring of the soul of another—a voyage of discovery, with all the strange glamour of as yet unconfessed love, gilding every word and look.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE ISLAND AT LAST

AS we drew near the position assigned by Captain Leigh to the island, we watched the runs and our position with particular care. If the wind had allowed us, I would have got on the right parallel and run down the longitude upon it. However, as you shall presently hear, we made a good landfall. On a certain day at noon we found we were in lat. $20^{\circ} 40'$ S., long. $107^{\circ} 20'$ W., about one hundred miles S.S.W. of our port. With the wind then prevailing we reckoned to run our distance in some fourteen hours; but we reckoned too quickly. The glorious uncertainty of canvas stepped in. We had baffling winds and light airs, and without avail whistled ourselves hoarse and longed for a breeze. In the end, we took over three days to do this distance.

I assure you that certain of the stars justified their existence during the last night before making the island; and we made full use of them as long as we had an horizon to which to bring them.

Hester stayed up all night, fidgetting about the deck. Her loyalty and respect for her father made

her anxious that his observation should be confirmed.

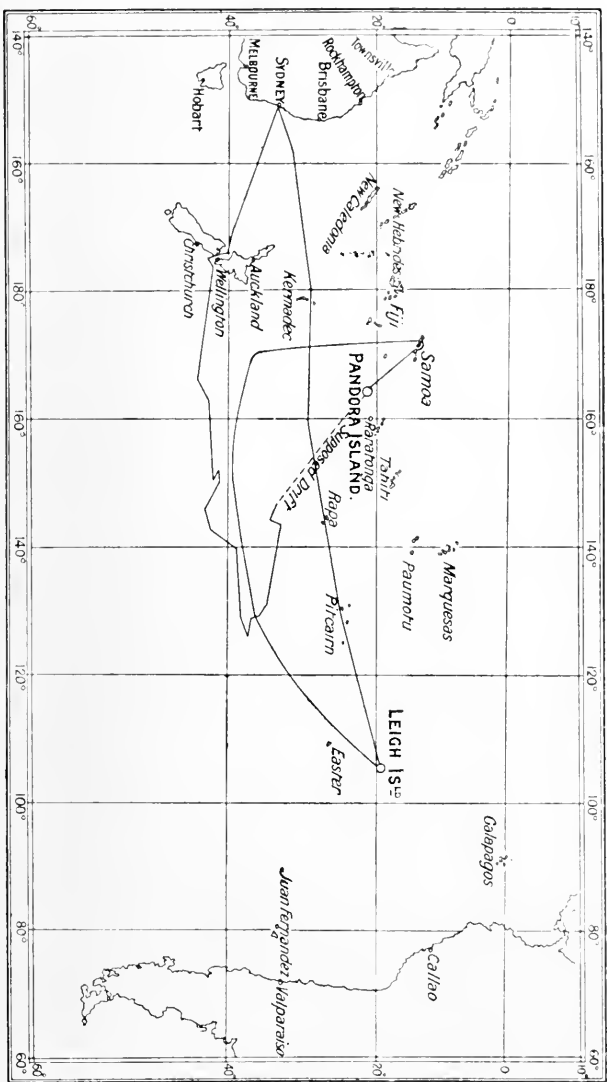
Considering the strength of the breeze, and the fact that there was no moon, I was afraid that we might over-run our distance; so, about 10 p.m., we shortened her down and let the schooner go easy, for I reckoned, if our calculations were correct, to make the land about daybreak.

It certainly was a time of much interest to Hester and to me. Sentiment, professional curiosity, and financial possibilities, all combined to make us keep a very wakeful look-out.

I sent a man aloft long before dawn, and I daresay I wearied him most consumedly by my repeated hails as to whether he saw anything. Hester had offered a reward to the man who should first sight land, as I discovered presently from the fact that there was more than one hand aloft sweeping the sea line.

At last we saw the eastern sky beginning to lighten as the twilight of morning began. Almost simultaneously I heard two hails of 'Land ho!'

I ran aloft, and there, where sea and sky met—'In the dim east, blue and blind'—I saw a faint smudge of deeper colour. My eyes told me it could be nothing else but land. It was far too large for a ship, too definite, I thought, for a cloud. Nevertheless, it is very easy to be mistaken; I have seen the most practised seamen fall into error over such matters. So I held my judgment for a little, knowing that a few minutes would certainly settle the question. With increase of light the indefinite smudge took on a clearer outline, and shortly we knew that the object



TRACK CHART OF THE VOYAGE OF THE PANDORA

of our devious voyage, a voyage which had cost so many lives and so much sorrow, lay before us.

It was after seven o'clock, the lead going all the time, before we were close in with the land, and struck soundings.

The island was apparently about two miles long, and, probably, less than that in breadth. It was shaped somewhat like a kidney, with the hollow lying towards the north-west. Acting on Wentworth's advice, we sailed completely round it before making any effort to anchor.

Nothing in the nature of a harbour could be discovered. But, on the lee side, an indentation existed, with something like a cleft in the shore line. This looked rather hopeful as a possible landing place for boats. We saw no trees, and very little evidence of herbage of any kind. It appeared a dreary, sad-looking spot; even bird life was not much in evidence, though possibly it might not have been the season for the feathered population to visit the island.

In truth it was by no means a convenient place either to anchor off or to land upon, and I foresaw many difficulties in loading at so exposed a spot. However, it was no use meeting troubles half way, and we cautiously crawled in towards the indentation I spoke about, and finally let go our anchor in about thirty fathoms, on broken ground.

With the south-east trade blowing we lay fairly easy, but a shift of wind anywhere between north-east and south-west would have made the island a lee shore, brought a sea into the anchorage, and altogether made the place anything but a healthy spot to be in.

As it was, we knew what wear and tear there would be with our ground tackle; and we discussed the question whether it would not be better to keep the schooner under weigh, standing off and on under steering canvas—except, of course, when we were actually putting the guano into her hold.

The afternoon on which we arrived some of us landed.

It was not a perfect day for the purpose, and the disembarkation required the exercise of a good deal of skill and care. It was not even an average good day; for, although there were occasions on which I may safely assert that no one could have effected a landing, yet, on the other hand, days occurred during which landing was absolutely simple, and even working cargo presented no serious difficulty.

I was, however, uneasy about the chance of a succession of vast unexpected waves rolling in upon us. I remembered at Tristan da Cunha seeing a boat's crew dashed to pieces before our eyes, and even the safety of the ship herself jeopardised by a sudden mountainous wave rolling on shore. 'Damn all Oceanic Islands; I'll never go near one again, far less let go an anchor,' said my skipper after the wave had spent itself, and the incident remained in my mind. However, there was, here, only an ordinary large ocean swell, and we backed the fine sharp-ended boat into the cove. And as we got abreast of a low, shelving ledge, Humphrey Wentworth jumped and landed safely at the expense of nothing worse than a wetting. I, however, refused to let either of the girls try to land on this occasion. I had agreed to take

them in the boat, but I would not let them risk a jump with the chance of being swept into the sea or getting their limbs broken.

Two of the men joined Wentworth; and they turned to and looked about them as to the best means of landing with less risk and more ease, if we were to regard this first attempt as a specimen of the conditions which usually obtained.

They first fixed two pieces of driftwood at a suitable distance from each other, and shored them up with large pieces of rock. To each of these posts we made fast a three-inch coir rope, and buoyed each end, finding them of great value in going alongside the landing shelf. Between the posts we stretched a life line with one or two short man ropes to lay hold of. We then returned to the schooner and laid out a kedge anchor, and buoyed it also, just at the mouth of the little creek. We intended this for use when we had need of the heavy cargo boat, and desired to drop it alongside a loading stage.

The following day there was much less surf, and Hester and Miss Langstaff went with us, each with an oilskin and suitable foot-gear. There was no difficulty on this occasion, and all landed dry-shod without adventure.

A rough survey of the island showed us that it contained no permanent water supply—at least we saw none. There were pools, however, the contents of which were none too sweet.

No timber grew, but there was a fair amount of logs, and timber to be got where it had been cast up by the sea.

The extent of the guano astonished us. We felt millionaires.

Miss Langstaff and the naval officer walked on ahead.

‘This place seems to be worth pots of money,’ I exclaimed.

‘How much is it worth a ton in London?’ asked Hester.

‘I don’t know,’ I replied, ‘and we haven’t got it there yet. You remember how the wicked little Scotch boy rebuked the Cockney who said that cattle would fetch higher prices in town than in the Highlands. “Yes,” said the boy, “but if I had Loch Lomond in hell, maybe it’s sixpence a glass I’d be getting for it.” We’re in the same trouble. We haven’t got the stuff to a market.’

‘But we shall! I know we shall!’ exclaimed Hester with emphasis.

She paused, looked around, and continued:

‘I shall certainly found schools for the dissemination of useful knowledge.’

‘Such as —,’ I asked innocently.

‘“The Compleat Art of Flirting,”’ said Hess, with a smile, as we looked across a little valley and beheld Wentworth quite needlessly helping the exceedingly agile Miss Langstaff up the other side.

‘Any other subjects?’

‘Yes, sir! “The Influence of Evil Example,” as exemplified by you doing the same while I am yet sound of limb, and neither fat nor fifty.’

‘Joking apart, dear,’ I said, ‘this place promises to make you so horribly, so unapproachably rich, that I become afraid of you.’

‘Dick,’ replied Hess, ‘these subterfuges are as transparent as they are valueless. You know my father intended that you should share in this venture, Thus you are really my partner in the unsavoury treasure trove. Besides—’ Hester paused, and then, with a laugh, she added, ‘are you not the “Captive of my bow and spear?” For you there is no escape.’

I forget exactly how this badinage ended; but I have an indefinite recollection that it did so agreeably.

It would be tedious to relate all our proceedings in detail during the weeks which we were obliged to spend on or about this desolate spot.

At first I was half inclined to land Martin and the two Kanakas and leave them with stores, the condenser, and a supply of coal, to prepare stagings and other facilities for the shipment of the guano. But after thinking the matter over, I saw clearly that to make a success of the venture, the business should be done once for all on a much larger scale than was possible with the small resources contained in the *Pandora*.

We, however, did do a great deal of preparatory work. For instance, we laid down two heavy moorings. One of them, in forty fathoms, was strengthened by attaching a chain to it, the other end of which was brought ashore, and made fast securely. In the creek, a rough landing stage, the foundation of which was large masses of rock, was tumbled together; and by means of it we loaded the schooner with what guano we took away.

A rough road was also made to the nearest deposit, and this was the pioneer of a future tramway.

We put up a hut and stored the condenser in it, together with a little coal. But as a matter of fact, there was sufficient driftwood to make such provision unnecessary.

On the highest point of the island we erected a stout flagstaff and fitted it with a large wooden painted Union Jack—an idea of one of the man-of-war's men. It creaked horribly as it swung like a great wind vane; however, it served its turn admirably. It was with this somewhat ungraceful emblem of our country that we took possession of Leigh Island—as we called it—in the name of Great Britain in general and ourselves in particular.

Wentworth tried his drill in various places; and, being given to calculations, he figured out a rough estimate of the quantity of guano on the island. Truly, the wealth represented by it on this remote spot reached a vast sum! We also took special samples of the deposit obtained by means of the drill from various depths.

Of course a good deal of the time and labour was expended over the survey of the island and the determination of its position; and it made Hester especially happy to find how closely Wentworth's longitude agreed with that noted by her father.

But the main labour, and it was very hard and terribly disagreeable, was getting the guano shipped. It was, indeed, a long, odious, difficult, and unsavoury business, often interrupted by adverse conditions of weather.

We had brought hundreds of gunny bags with us (with which to stow the lower part of the hold), as we

did not wish to carry the stuff in bulk in case the limbers or pumps should get choked with guano grit. You can easily believe that the filling of these bags and their transportation to the improvised jetty meant an immense amount of toil for our small crew, part of whom, remember, were engaged most of the time in survey work. However, I must record that the two girls helped Wentworth very much, and so gave me an extra hand.

Still, the loading was accomplished at last, and hateful as the smell of our cargo was at first to us, and irritating to the eyes and nose, as it was, we came at last to be perfectly indifferent to it. Our one lasting desire was to get the job done and to be off. And at last that happy day did arrive, when the last boat-load was aboard, the hatches on, and the wedges driven.

I never listened to a chanty with greater zest than when the voices of our small crowd broke the solitude of this desolate island with their song :

We are homeward bound to Liverpool Town,
Good-bye, fare ye well ! good-bye, fare ye well !
Get up, Jack, and let John sit down,
Good-bye, fare ye well !
We are homeward bound, good-bye,
Fare ye well !

If Cloacina, the goddess of such places, were still there, she must have wondered who dared thus to wake the slumbers of her malodorous palace.

By nightfall we had run it out of sight, and our head at last pointed west for New South Wales.

CHAPTER XXIV

IN WHICH I COIL UP ROPES GENERALLY AND SAY 'GOOD-BYE'

IT is a far cry from Leigh Island to New South Wales. But it is, for the most part, a fine weather passage. And, for us, it was, of course, mostly a voyage of fair winds. I shall say nothing about it, except that it was a most happy one.

How shall I ever forget the glorious morning on which we at last sighted the Australian coast! We had made the land near Broken Bay, and slipped quickly down from Barranjoey to Sydney Heads. Several vessels were in sight, and there was a fine sailing breeze. As we approached the entrance to Port Jackson we saw what I shall always think the noblest sight in the world—a large clipper ship under canvas. The tug had let her go, and cloth after cloth was being piled on the three tapering spires of lofty mast. As she lifted to the swell and leaned over to the breeze one saw the long clean glistening hull, greyish green at the water line, and with its chequered ports shining in all the glory of a recent overhaul. I knew the ship in a moment. Built in Aberdeen, she

was one of the last of the true 'Gypsies of the Horn' which have for so many years carried the fleeces of the great Southland to the Thames. But their day is over, and Sydney soon will no longer know their graceful shapes and all their splendid rivalries of record passages.

We had our number flying, and so had the noble vessel passing us—JWTV. Nor did I need to look her up in the signal book to know that these letters meant *Torridon*. I waved a good-bye to a familiar figure I saw upon her poop, and the vessels rapidly separated—she to her long struggle with the giant combers of the Southern Ocean, we to rest in the land-locked haven of Sydney.

We anchored in Watson's Bay, in almost the same spot from which we had started. And there we were detained for some hours, pending the decision of the Health Board. At last we were allowed to proceed, and under our own canvas we slowly sailed up the glorious sheet of water, finally letting go our anchor in Elizabeth Bay. The long voyage was at an end.

Wentworth, Hester, and I landed; and he at once went off to report himself to the Senior Naval Officer in port.

With what curious, what mingled feelings, we two once more found ourselves ashore in the colony which we now regarded as our home! Funnily enough, we had never discussed what we would do when we did reach New South Wales. And when Wentworth had disappeared in a cab we turned to one another with interrogative looks, signifying that we didn't exactly know our next move.

‘What shall we do now?’ I said.

‘I’d like to rest for a while,’ replied Hess.

We sat down on one of the seats near the jetty, and before us both the strange vicissitudes, the tragic events, the sorrows of the past few months, spread themselves out in a kind of panorama, leading at last to the consolation of our love, and our hopes for the future. Tears came into my dear one’s eyes.

‘Oh, Dick, Dick!’ she exclaimed, ‘if only poor father had been spared! I’ll tell you now what I have never told to you before. Father knew you liked me, and the day before I lost him he said all sorts of good things of you, and ended by saying that he would be satisfied if I cared for you. “For,” he added, “I see, well enough, that this same Blackburne will one day rob me of you; so I may as well be robbed cheerfully as not.” And the dear kind father smiled, and stroked my cheeks, which were hot enough, I can remember now, for it was perfectly true of me then—I loved you.’

‘Ah, now,’ I said, ‘I understand his curious parting words to me after that interview, of which I once told you—“And be sure you are good to my girl.” I understand.’

‘Of course, sweetheart, that is what was in my father’s mind,’ agreed Hester. ‘It makes me doubly happy to think he liked you.’

I am sure we must have remained talking half an hour before the necessity of settling something forced itself upon us. But at last we rose and walked up the hill above the jetty.

‘I’ll put you in a cab,’ I said, as we gained the top,

‘and you’d better drive right off to Mrs. Rawlinson’s. I will go down to the Custom House and to Mr. Rawlinson’s office and fix up the ship’s business. I’ll meet you there at four this afternoon and report progress.’

We parted, she to Woollahra, and I into town.

One of the first things I learned was that I was no longer absolutely dependent on my profession. My cousin, the squatter, was dead, and perhaps thinking he had dealt somewhat hardly with me, he had left me a moderate competence; not riches, indeed, but sufficient to take from my mind the unpleasant thought that I was about to hang up my hat in my wife’s house, an idea filled with gall and wormwood to a man of my temper.

My interview with Mr. Rawlinson was a long one. He was deeply interested in the voyage, and as he was co-trustee under Captain Leigh’s will, as well as agent in his business, naturally my account of the guano island arrested his attention, being, as it was, very material to the value of the estate. He advised me to write a detailed report of the deposit, which I at once did. I recounted the tests made to gauge the depth of the guano, and I mentioned Wentworth’s rough estimate of the amount of the material, and the data on which that estimate was based. I further described what preliminary work had been carried on by us; such as the making of the road and stagings, and the laying down of the moorings. A preliminary account and plan of the island by Wentworth was given me by the naval people, and finally I attached this and a report on the samples of guano from a competent agricultural chemist.

Although not of the very highest grade, his examination showed that it had lost comparatively little in ammoniacal richness by atmospheric action. In short, that it was of good fertilising power. The Government, indeed, became the purchaser of our cargo for use on their experimental farms.

Mr. Rawlinson thought most favourably of the prospects of the venture, and advised that we should float the undertaking into a company. He and Captain Leigh's solicitors, Messrs. John, James, and John, took the matter in hand. It took time; but in the end the affair was successfully carried through on terms sufficiently favourable to the original proprietrix or proprietors, for I found that by Captain Leigh's wish I stood in as an original owner of one-third of the whole. Hester and I wished also that the Langstaffs and Wentworth should share in what the island was going to give us. Nor did we overlook the interests of Martin and the two others who had been with us in the time of the pestilence.

To make a long story short, the undertaking was successfully launched, and we were well satisfied with the terms on which we stood.

Langstaff was so certain of the prospects of the same company that he cabled home for permission to take some of the shares offered to the public on account of his father's firm.

Nor did he stop at that, for the first two ships chartered to load at Leigh Island were the *Abraham Lincoln* and the *Governor Rooseveltdt*, both vessels belonging to his employ. They were first to load coal for the West Coast, and then to go down to the island

for guano, Langstaff agreeing to sail as mate of the last-named ship. What I have just recounted took, of course, a considerable time to carry through.

At four in the afternoon, as arranged, I went up to Mr. Rawlinson's office, and at the door Hester met me, accompanied by Mrs. Rawlinson, who greeted me with all the kindness for which she was deservedly liked.

'I wish Miss Leigh and her American friends to come out to Woollahra and stay with us,' she said, 'and I shall be delighted if you can come, too, Mr. Blackburne.'

'My children are simply wild to see you and hear about all your wonderful adventures. It is quite a romance!'

'Thanks very much, Mrs. Rawlinson,' I replied; 'but I think Langstaff and I must stick to the schooner for the present. But if I may I should like to call.'

'If you may, you'd like to call,' she repeated, scornfully. 'Listen to him, Hester! How polite he is! Well, you may call; and you shall find more people glad to see you than one. We are going off to your wonderful little ship to tea. But I must just run in and see my husband for a moment.'

She entered the handsome office, and Hess and I were left standing on the steps.

'Isn't she a dear,' exclaimed Hester. 'She couldn't have been sweeter to me than if she had been my own mother. It is now, when I am once again in civilisation, that I realise what a lonely brace of people we are in the sense of having no relations. So this dear woman's motherliness touches me.'

‘By Jove, Hess!’ I said, ‘she is good to ask the whole crowd of us up. I suppose you’ll accept for Dorothy Langstaff?’

‘Yes, I shall,’ replied Hess. ‘She won’t be leaving Sydney for some little time.’ And Hester smiled.

‘I know, I know!’ I returned. ‘The happy bridesmaid makes the happy bride.’

‘Well, not quite. Since you ask, Mr. Inquisitive, Dorothy is going to see me finally handed over to you, sir. But her own plans are not yet settled. She is going to stay with me till she hears from her people. I think she and Mr. Wentworth won’t marry for some time. His commission here is up in six months, and his present intention is to go to the United States on his way to England and marry Dorothy at her father’s house.’

‘Now, young people,’ said Mrs. Rawlinson, re-appearing, ‘I’m ready. Where shall I tell the man to drive us?’

We were soon on board the schooner, and our American friends and Mrs. Rawlinson made known to each other. The girls now busied themselves packing up, while Mrs. Rawlinson went all round the vessel, looked into and criticised every cabin, and finally interviewed the irrepressible Alf, who, having brought tea and set it out on the top of the little house, remained close by, longing for a yarn and full of a request, which Mrs. Rawlinson retailed to us later on.

‘What position do you fill on board, my boy?’ asked Mrs. Rawlinson, unsuspectingly.

‘I’m a s’ilor, lydy, and I’m a stooard as well,’ said Alf, unabashed.

‘Have you been ashore yet?’ continued Mrs. Rawlinson.

‘No, ma’am, but I’ll ’ave a squint round the block arter we gets alongside, an’ look hup a few o’ my mates.’

After a few commonplace remarks the boy looked cautiously round to see that we were all out of ear-shot.

‘A word with you, lydy, No hoffense, I ’opes, but I’ve a hambition.’

‘Good gracious,’ exclaimed comfortable Mrs. Rawlinson. ‘What is it?’

‘Well, it’s this w’y : I’ve been readin’ a lot about weddin’s in the Fam’ly ’Erald, and the w’y they manages things in ’igh life, gettin’ ’ooked on an’ sich like in real tip-top style—tucker an’ lush till further horders—bridesmaids—cakes—and a breakfast at three in the arternoon—fancy that now! But what I wants is this. They torks in them torf yarns about a pyge. I knows, all right, that the “old man” and our young lydy are keepin’ company, and is a-goin’ to get spliced. Well, lydy, you’re a friend of theirs, haint yer? Will you arst them to let me be a pyge?’

Mrs. Rawlinson laughed a little, and told Alf that she couldn’t promise that he would be a page, but that she would see that he was at our wedding.

‘Thankee, ma’am!’ said Alf, as he removed the tea things; ‘I’m dead nuts on the job; I’d like to see meself happearin’ in the sassiety column of the pyper as bein’ fust bottle-washer in a ’igh class ’ookin’ on.’

At last the girls had their traps put together, and I handed Mrs. Rawlinson into the boat. They followed, and all hands joined in giving them a cheer as they went over the side. Hester had not forgotten one of our crew; and, in addition to the extra pay which we gave them for their services, she had at once gone and purchased something personal for each man on board. This accounted for the vast array of parcels which loaded up Mrs. Rawlinson's carriage on the way to the boat.

Langstaff and I had a pipe and a yarn, then he went on superintending the unbending of sails and other matters preparatory to our unloading and docking, while I went below to clear up and to write. But to compose a letter was, I found, an impossibility.

All the events of the past months passed before me in review. The ordinary incident which led to my acquaintance with Captain Leigh; the tragic voyage to Pandora Island; the rescue of the Langstaffs and our subsequent experiences—all these strands of this strange voyage laid themselves up in one moving coil, while there ran through its heart the crimson thread of my love for Hester. And as I sat I could do no more than bow my head and thank God for all His goodness to me.

Within a month of the day on which we reached Sydney, Hester and I were married, as she wished, in St. James' Church. Our wedding was a very quiet one. Mr. Rawlinson gave the bride away, and Alf had the satisfaction of seeing us 'looked on.'

I feel that my seafaring is not yet over, and that

I shall see Leigh Island again. But, perhaps, that will make another story. Martin will always be with us, whether at sea or on shore. And I think I may almost say the same of the cook and of Alf Nash.

And now, dear reader, my little tale is told, and the last rope is coiled down—so I have nothing left to say, except Farewell!

EPILOGUE

It is evening, and we have reached the homestead after our long journey.

An occasional call of some bird comes from the encircling bush. The crack of a whip is heard as one of the station hands turns our horses into the paddock.

Dick and I are sitting on the broad verandah. We see the glisten of the creek which flows in silver at the bottom of the garden. A *debutante* moon is rising over the near hills.

Within the house is warmth and peace—a log fire and a cheerful table.

My husband turns to me; our hands touch and clasp; and the world seems very fair to both of us.

Destiny prolong the present;
Time stand still here.

APPENDIX

ON FINDING A LOST DATE, DECLINATION, AND GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION

A CHAPTER FOR SEAFARING PEOPLE ONLY

IN my narrative of the voyage of the *Pandora* I briefly described how I recovered my date and found the position of the uncharted island to which the schooner had drifted. The problems involved in the recovery of time and place are always interesting to the navigator, and I thought, therefore, that possibly some of my nautical readers might be sufficiently attracted to the subject to care to read the details of the methods by which the necessary facts were obtained. I have, therefore, not only set forth the actual means by which I recovered my time, and my latitude and longitude, but have discussed the methods generally most likely to be of service for this purpose, at least so far as finding the day of the month is concerned.

A hundred years ago, when the nautical almanac and a dozen short cuts to astronomical knowledge had not reached the pitch of perfection to which they have now attained, the navigator who desired to be

armed at all points in his profession was obliged to be familiar with the methods by which many of the data, that we now take out at sight from tables or almanacs, might be computed. One of the best teachers of such knowledge was Dr. Robertson, at one time Master of Christ's Hospital.

Among Captain Leigh's effects was this author's treatise on navigation, a book published in the middle of the last century, and I doubt not the text-book which Cook and Nelson thumbed and conned.

I was struck on looking over it by the excellent way in which the trigonometrical bases of the modern epitome methods are therein handled.

In the present 'fix' in which I found myself I obtained a good many useful wrinkles from it. I like to take this opportunity of acknowledging my indebtedness to this ancient treatise, and I wish the book were better known, and wonder why some competent hand has not re-edited the matter, still of value, and thus continued the career of usefulness of so admirable a work.

As I said in a former chapter, I cannot doubt that a better navigator than I am would have solved my difficulties in other and more excellent ways than I did. But I merely wish to record the methods I made use of in solving a problem, that evidently, judging by the discussions which crop up occasionally in nautical journals, must possess some interest for the seafaring community.

You will remember that I had lost all count of time. I knew the year, but not the month or day, or Greenwich date—the timekeepers had stopped, and

I had no compass; the latitude and longitude of the island were unknown to me. Obviously my first duty was to recover the day of the month.

A.—*To find the date and the latitude.*

1. The first thing I did was to obtain the sun's meridian altitude, which, when reduced, gave me a true altitude of $46^{\circ} 45' 4''$. From this observation I therefore obtained a fairly approximate apparent time at ship, and with the time so got I set going a good watch. The following day, I may add, the sun's meridian altitude was $46^{\circ} 38' 46''$, showing that he was still on the vernal side of the northern solstice. I used an artificial horizon for both these observations, as it gave greater precision.

2. About half-past four or thereby, in the afternoon of the same day, I took several distances between the sun and moon, the mean of which, after index error and the approximate semi-diameters of the two objects had been applied, gave me an apparent distance of $99^{\circ} 17' 8''$. The sun, I believed, was west of the moon, because that satellite, being a waxing one, had her western limb the illuminated portion. This was in keeping with the fact that the moon was in her first quarter in the first week of June. (N.A.)

Using this rough observation as if it were a true distance, I turned to the nautical almanac and scanned all the sun and moon distances for May and June. In May, the distance $99^{\circ} 17' 8''$ fell between the 6th at XXI. hours and the 7th at noon at Greenwich, with likewise a waxing moon.

Secondly, the same distance likewise fell between June 5th at XIV. hours and June 5th at XVIII. hours.

I noted both the times, knowing that it was pretty sure to be one or the other, for we could not really have unwittingly got into the month of July. Moreover, the lesser meridian altitude of the sun on the following day negatived such an inference by showing that the sun was still going north.

I suspected that the June date was the correct one, but I now proceeded to check that presumption in several ways.

3. When night came I observed if the apparent time of the meridian passages of certain stars took place at the hours they should for the 5th of June, using here the A.T.S. by my watch, which I had set by the sun's meridian altitude that day, which day my rough lunar made me believe to be the 5th June, 1900. Assuming the date to be 5th June, I found from the tables that the following bright stars crossed the meridian as under:—Spica at 8h. 21m.; B Centauri at 8h. 59m.; and A Centauri at 9h. 34m. I next observed that their meridian altitudes were obtained just about the times stated, whereas if the date had been May 6th, the hours at which their meridian passages occurred would have been:—Spica, 10h. 22m.; B Centauri, 10h. 57m.; A Centauri, 11h. 34m.; which further confirmed me in the belief that the date was the 5th June. Even if I had no rough lunar observation or other help that afternoon to give me a date, I would, by perseverance and patience, have got the apparent time of meridian passage of a star and so identified the day of the month. Happily this Job-like altitude was not necessary.

4. I now wished to further identify the date by

using the declination of the sun or the moon. First I sought for the sun's declination. The easiest way to obtain it is by means of the latitude of the place. I therefore worked up the stellar observations.

The true altitudes of the three stars observed were :—

Spica.	B Centauri.	A Centauri.
T. A. $79^{\circ} 58' 40''$ N.	T. A. $50^{\circ} 46' 0''$ S.	T. A. $50^{\circ} 14' 36''$ S.

and the resulting latitudes therefrom were :

Lat. $20^{\circ} 40' 0''$ S.	Lat. $20^{\circ} 39' 51''$ S.	Lat. $20^{\circ} 40' 9''$ S.
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The mean of which was $20^{\circ} 40' 0''$ S., and this I accepted as correct.

Having got my latitude I found the sun's declination as follows :—From the meridian altitude I obtained the zenith distance, and to this I applied the latitude obtained by stellar observations. Obviously it was subtractive, and the result was the sun's declination for noon of that day at ship. Substituting the declination thus gained for the latitude by star we get $20^{\circ} 40'$ as the latitude by meridian altitude of the sun. I give the small calculations below :

On supposed 5th

June—Sun's Mer.

Alt.	$46^{\circ} 45' 4''$	Sun's Mer. Alt.	$46^{\circ} 45' 4''$	N.
	$90^{\circ} 0' 0''$		$90^{\circ} 0' 0''$	

Sun's Meridian,

Zenith, Dist. ...	$43^{\circ} 14' 56''$	Sun's M. Z. D.	$43^{\circ} 14' 56''$	S.
Latitude by star ...	$20^{\circ} 40' 0''$	Sun's Decln. ...	$22^{\circ} 34' 56''$	N.

Declination of Sun

on 5th June at

ship	$22^{\circ} 34' 56''$	Lat.	$20^{\circ} 40' 0''$	S.
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This same method can be practised by using the declination of the moon, the only trouble being the weary waiting to get her meridian altitude, for when one does not yet possess a longitude by which to correct the time of her meridian passage at Greenwich to the hour of local transit, there is nothing for it but simply to wait, sextant in hand, for that event. In latitude $20^{\circ} 40' S.$, with a change in declination so swift as was the moon's on June 5th, and always remembering also that the maximum altitude was, therefore, not quite the true meridian elevation, not only could the correct day be obtained, but a pretty close approximation to the correct hour and minute of Greenwich mean time.

5. Yet another means of obtaining the date by means of the declination is that by two altitudes of the sun—a method worth knowing if no stars are visible, or no lunar distance available.

In Robertson's Navigation a number of problems are to be found dealing with the above question. The one most applicable to our present plight was one which I have found absolutely satisfactory in higher latitudes and at other seasons of the year. The data required are the sun's meridian altitude, and a second altitude, taken at a known interval of time after the meridian. With these elements the midnight depression is obtained. (This is often got without the aid of trigonometry.)

Half the sum of the midnight depression and the meridian altitude = co-latitude, while half their difference = the declination. Thence you readily obtain the date and the latitude.*

* See Robertson's Navigation, Book V., page 252, Prob. XLII.

I found, however, that in lat. $20^{\circ} 40' S.$, with the sun so far north, the problem was not a very suitable one to make use of. Moreover, I did not really need its help, for the heavens, till after midnight, sparkled with familiar stars, while the moon, like the hand of a great clock, had already pointed to the time, and given me what I sought.

6. Having found the declination of the sun or moon when either cross the meridian at ship, I proceeded to compare the declination so obtained, with the declinations in their proper places, in the pages of the nautical almanac. For the sun as follows:—

Declination at Greenwich, June 5th = $22^{\circ} 31' 52.2'' N.$

Declination at Place = $22^{\circ} 34' 56.0''$

3' 3.8"

Declination at Greenwich, June 6th = $20^{\circ} 38' 21'' N.$

Declination at Place = $22^{\circ} 34' 56''$

3' 35"

The declination found for the sun at noon at place is therefore that for the 5th of June at Greenwich—as may be seen on reference to the N.A. Using the declination of the moon found in the same way (always remembering the insufficient data in correcting the semidiameter and horizontal parallax) the date indicated was likewise the 5th June—and further, a M.T.G. was indicated which corresponded fairly closely with the M.T.G. obtained from the rough lunar.

It was now clear that the date was the 5th of June, and I had a rough idea of the hour and minute at Greenwich.

It is worth while noting that an approximation to the hours and minutes of Greenwich mean time, and thence the longitude, may be obtained from the declination of the sun by simple proportion, thus:—

June 5th, Declination	22° 31' 52·2" N.
June 6th, Declination	22° 38' 21·0" N.

Difference in 24 hours	<u>6' 28·8"</u>
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June 5th, Declination at Greenwich	20° 31' 52·2" N.
June 5th, Declination at Place ...	22° 34' 56·0" N.

Difference in (X) hours	<u>3' 3·8"</u>
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$$\begin{array}{ccc} & \text{H.} & \text{H. M. S.} \\ 6' 28·8'' : 3' 3·8'' :: 24 \text{ (or } 360^\circ) : 11 \quad 21 \quad 8 \end{array}$$

The inference being that the Greenwich date was 5d. 11h. 21m. 8s.

Longitude can also be obtained by proportioning as above, but usually it is very far from the truth—over six degrees in this case. I have, however, elsewhere, and at other times, found in this way a longitude within half a degree of correctness. The time obtained, however, is sufficiently near to be of use in correcting the elements for a subsequent lunar observation. The G.M.T. got from the lunar could then be at once used for re-correcting the elements, for the re-working of the problem, and thus getting a more accurate result. In my own case I used an approximate Greenwich date obtained from my first rough lunar, which was almost the same as that deduced from the moon's declination; but the difference in time between the rough lunar and the time obtained by proportion from the two declinations for correction

purposes was really not very great—as $15^{\text{h}}.5$ is to $15^{\text{h}}.9$ —a difference of four decimal points.

I now knew my date and latitude, and I had a chronometer set going to an approximate Greenwich mean time, sufficiently near the truth for the correction of elements from the nautical almanac. The night, however, had become overcast, and so I went to bed, pretty satisfied with my progress so far. The following day, in the afternoon, the sky was clear, and I prepared to take some lunar distances. I wished, of course, to get a good apparent time at ship from one of the objects observed. I found that the sun set about 5h. 23m. p.m., but with latitude and declination of opposite names, he would never come to the prime vertical, so I had to try to get his altitude as near the horizon as possible, always remembering the effect of refraction at low altitudes, especially in the afternoon.

B.—To find Greenwich mean time and thence the longitude.

Somewhere about four-fifteen (A.T.S. obtained from the sun's mer. alt. obs.) I began the observation, Hester taking the times. I took the sun's altitude first, as he was furthest from the meridian—the moon's altitude and the distances in due sequence, and then the altitudes again in the reverse order. Being single-handed I had to use proportion, of course, for the mean middle time of the distance. Hence both the observation and the preliminary calculations made a lengthy business. But Hester checked every figure, and we looked out the logarithms separately, so the risks of aggravating clerical errors were small. It is maddening 'to clear a distance' and find you have

taken out a sine instead of a cosine, and perhaps have to tackle it all anew. Or, worse still, to have got some of the elements incorrectly stated.

I so far fell from grace that I used Thomson's tables in 'clearing the distance.' Their use saved me several chances of error, for Borda's method with ten logarithms to look out is a large order. The true distance now obtained gave me a Greenwich mean time, which, with the mean time at ship got from the sun's altitude, put the island in longitude $164^{\circ} 37' 45''$ W. I now re-worked the calculation with the more accurate G.M.T. just obtained, with a resulting longitude of $164^{\circ} 30' 15''$ W.

The sun's distance from the moon was rather large (over 110°), still I took comfort in the fact that Captain Leigh's sextant was a very fine one, and I had seen that the line of collimation was perfect, and that the index error was known. During the next few days I took a number of lunar distances with Jupiter E of the moon and Regulus W. of the moon, and again, later on, before we left the island, when the sun was east of the moon, and the results of these observations went to show that our longitude was $164^{\circ} 28' 34''$ W., and with that I rested content—it was under ten miles in error, as I afterwards found out.

And now having got my timekeepers fairly going with what I hoped was a G.M.T. near enough to keep us from getting ashore, it is time for me to apologise for this dull recital of my crude efforts after 'Time and Place.' Happily for me I had for a number of years taken a good deal of interest in

lunars, for I hold that this 'dead' (Lecky), 'this foolish, though fascinating, problem' (Dunraven), deserves to be kept alive, not only because it might be useful, as in our strange case, but also because the man who is a good 'lunarian' is, of a consequence, a good all-round observer. Moreover the calculations necessary to reach even a passable result need care, and are themselves a mental discipline. No one now proposes to navigate either narrow channels or great oceans by lunars, nor, if he can get a well-known point of land, or a time signal, does he wish to rate his chronometers by them. Nevertheless, I grieve over the disuse of the 'lunar,' even as I sorrow over the passing of the sailing ship.

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